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THE

HISTORY AND LITERATURE

OF THE ISRAELITES.

THE

HISTORY AND LITERATURE

OF THE ISRAELITES,

ACCORDING TO THE

OLD TESTAMENT AND THE APOCRYPHA.

110747
Rothschild
VOLUME I.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

(WITH A MAP OF PALESTINE, AND A MAP SHOWING THE JOURNEYS OF THE HEBREWS IN THE DESERT.)

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PREFACE.

It is not without much diffidence that we offer this unpretending work to the public; indeed we should hardly have ventured to do so, as so many great writers have been engaged upon the same subject, had we not believed that it had never been actually treated in the same way, nor for precisely the same purpose, that we have had in view. It has been our intention to give an account of the history and of the literature of the Israelites for the use of the young, who cannot, without turning the Bible into a lesson-book, acquire the desired knowledge direct from its pages, and who are scarcely prepared to consult works of a learned or a more advanced order. We have attempted to accomplish our task without entering upon any controversial or dogmatical point; for it has been our desire merely to facilitate a familiar acquaintance with the facts and personages of the Holy Scriptures, and so to help our readers to

find deeper interest in the Bible itself, and to arouse in them a greater wish to study the learned authors who have given us their expositions of the Holy Text.

If we succeed in doing so, if after the perusal of our book, the Bible is more eagerly sought for, if its pages are better understood and its teaching consequently becomes more effectual, our aim will have been attained.

The first part of this work is chiefly historical; while the second contains an account of the prophetic and the poetical writings of the Old Testament, and from the nature of the subjects discussed, will be adapted to somewhat maturer readers.

It only remains for us to acknowledge how much, on a path often beset by difficulties, we have been indebted to such authors as Stanley, Milman, Kalisch, and Jost.

London, September 15th, 1870.

C. de Rothschild.
A. de Rothschild.

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INTRODUCTION.

The Hebrew Bible sets forth mainly the history of the Israelites. It relates their origin, their growth, and their decline, from the earliest days until the time when, returning as released captives from a foreign land, they attempted to establish a new commonwealth, which, in its turn, was destroyed by powerful conquerors. But the Bible shows also, how the Israelites were instructed and led by God, were elected to receive from Him eternal truths, and singled out to disseminate them throughout the earth. Therefore, it speaks of God's wisdom, mercy, and power, and points out, how He watches and rules over individuals and nations. Thus it has become the Book for all ages and for all mankind. It presents the most beautiful examples of faith, meekness, obedience, and courage. The laws of Moses are more just, more merciful, and better fitted to promote virtue and happiness than those framed by any other nation of antiquity. The poetry which graces the pages of the Bible, has lost none of its freshness and beauty in the thousands of years that have rolled by since it was first written; it has still the power of stirring up our deepest feelings; it still affords delight and consolation. And the impassioned words of the prophets, so noble in thought and so fervid in language, remain as imperishable monuments of piety and holy zeal. Thus distinguished by everything that can exalt the mind, delight the imagination,

and direct man through the difficulties of life, we can well understand how the Bible found its way from the east to all climes, near and far; and how, coming as the history of God's chosen people, it was hailed as God's own Book to teach and exhort, to gladden and to comfort.

The Bible consists of four and twenty Books which, as may be inferred from the preceding remarks, either contain laws and history, or poetry and prophecy. But they have been generally divided into three great classes:

I. The Law (תּוֹרָה), which is embodied in the five Books of Moses or the Pentateuch, viz. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; though the Pentateuch is not exclusively a code of laws, but relates also the early history of mankind and that of the Hebrews down to the death of Moses.

II. The Prophets (נְבִיאִים), subdivided into the *Earlier Prophets* (נְבִיאִים רִאשֹׁנִים) and the *Later Prophets* (נְבִיאִים אַחֲרֹנִים); the former comprising the historical Books of Joshua and Judges, two Books of Samuel and two Books of Kings; and the latter, the three great prophets, viz. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets forming one book, viz. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

III. Poetical and other Writings (כְּתוּבִים), including the Psalms, Proverbs, and Job; the Song of Solomon, Ruth, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, Ecclesiastes, and Esther; Daniel; Ezra, Nehemiah, and the two Books of Chronicles: of these the first four and the Lamentations are properly poetical, Ecclesiastes is a philosophic work, and Daniel a prophecy, while the rest are historical.

I. THE EARLY HISTORY OF MANKIND.

[Genes. I—XI.]

1. THE CREATION.

[Genes. I. 1.—II. 3.]

The Bible commences with an account of the origin of the world. That account of the Creation is grand in its simplicity. God produced the world out of nothing by the sole power of His will and command. In the beginning of time, He called into existence the matter out of which heaven and earth were to be formed. But this matter was in confusion and dreary darkness. Within six days He shaped it into a world of order and beauty. On the first day, He said: "Let there be Light" — and "there was Light." The darkness was dispelled; the first great step was accomplished. On the second day, He divided the waters, which everywhere covered the original matter, by an expanse which He called Heaven: one part of the water was kept above this firmament, another beneath it, or upon the Earth. On the third day, He gathered the waters of the earth in certain parts and thus formed the Seas, so that, in other parts, the Dry Land became visible, which He at once clothed with verdure bright and beautiful, with every variety of vegetation, of flower and fruit — a world only wanting life to be perfect. Thus the three first days were employed

in calling into existence what was most essential—light, heaven, and earth. But each of these three creations was to be made more complete, and each therefore engaged again God's care and wisdom. For on the fourth day, He produced the light-giving bodies, the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars; on the fifth, the Birds of the air that rise to the expanse of heaven, and the Fish that teem in the seas; while on the sixth day, He peopled the earth with Beasts, great and small, with cattle and reptiles—animating with joyous life, plain, and hill, and forest.

But when the earth was beautiful in its fresh garb of verdure, when the bright sun beamed down from the blue heavens, and the cool waters girt the land like a broad belt, when air, sea, and earth were filled with happy and peaceful denizens; God, in His wisdom, saw fit to call forth a being able and worthy to enjoy all this beauty, and to rule over all this wealth; and He created Man in His own image, giving him a mind capable, if not of understanding, at least of adoring Him. Man, gifted with reason and an immortal soul, was entrusted with the dominion over the earth and all that is upon it, over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

The great work of creation was finished on the sixth day. On the seventh, God rested; and we are told, He "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." Thus it became the type of the Sabbath, which men should enjoy after six busy days of labour, and which was to be a blessing to the weary, and a sanctification to all.

2. PARADISE AND THE FALL.

[Genes. II. 4.—III. 24.]

The earth stood radiand in beauty; God had adorned it with luxuriant vegetation, with lovely flowers, and stately

trees, and delicious fruits. The man, Adam, whom He had created, was placed by Him in a spot which well deserved its name as a "garden of delight" or Eden. It was situated in the vicinity of that extremely fertile and beautiful region, where the two rivers Euphrates and Tigris meet, and where, besides, they are joined by two other streams, which the Bible calls Pison and Gihon. It must, therefore, be looked for in or around the district of the present province of Iran, though it is impossible for us to define its position with exactness. More perfect in its loveliness than any garden we have ever seen, blooming with every plant that is pleasant to look upon, filled with every fruit that is good to the taste, and watered by the four rivers which, separating in the garden towards all directions, flowed forth to fertilize the land — such was the exquisite abode of our first ancestor. But he was to enjoy it only in proportion to the labour and care which he would bestow upon its cultivation. Therefore God commanded him to watch and tend it with eager zeal.

Among all the trees that abounded in Eden, there were two more wonderful than the rest — the tree of knowledge and the tree of life. And God commanded Adam: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for when thou eatest thereof thou must surely die."

But the creation was not complete. Man was not yet perfectly happy. Animal life, so material for his enjoyment, indeed surrounded him on all sides. The numberless birds and the vast variety of beasts, which God brought to him to name, pleased and interested him. But he was without a real companion able to inspire him with deeper sympathy. He still felt alone. God determined upon another act of mercy. Adam fell into a profound sleep, and when he

returned to awakening consciousness, it was to see before him a wondrous being, who was both the last and the most beautiful of God's creations. Man called this being Woman, and exclaimed with delight, "This time it is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh;" and later he named her Eve because she was to become "the mother of all living." Man and woman were designed by the Almighty to spend in the garden of Eden an eternal life of happiness and innocence.

But this beautiful existence did not continue long. The serpent tempted the woman to make her disobedient to the only command imposed by God upon the first man. That most subtle of all beasts cunningly asked Eve, "Has indeed God said, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" To which the woman answered, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, you shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." Then the serpent, craftily pursuing its object, and relying for success upon human weakness, assured the woman, that she would certainly not die, but that by eating of the forbidden fruit, her eyes would be opened, and she would, like God, be able to distinguish good from evil. The woman, so tempted, and moreover allured by the beautiful appearance of the tree, yielded, gathered of the fruit, and ate, and gave to her husband, who also tasted of it. Shame followed upon sin. Man and woman, hearing the voice of the Lord God in the garden, hid themselves, and were afraid. But God asked Adam sternly, "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee thou shouldst not eat?" to which man answered with a cowardly trembling, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." The woman, in her turn, timidly threw the guilt upon the serpent who had

beguiled her. Severe retribution attended this first sin of disobedience. God cursed the serpent to be the most despised among all the animals of creation, to crawl upon its belly, and to eat dust for ever, while it should live in deadly hatred with mankind. "I will put enmity", said God, "between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Then God proclaimed the punishment of man and woman. They were expelled from the garden of Eden, which could be the abode of the innocent alone; they were thenceforth to eat their bread in the sweat of their brow; for the earth would be cursed on account of their sin, and would bring forth thorns and thistles, and scanty harvests; so they would have to toil and to struggle till death released them; for they were taken from dust and to dust must they return. — Thus man forfeited for ever eternal life and ease on earth, or as it is symbolically expressed in the Bible-narrative, "God placed before the garden of Eden Cherubims, with the flame of the revolving sword, to keep the way of the tree of life."

3. THE GENERATIONS BETWEEN ADAM AND NOAH.

[Genes. IV. V.]

Adam and Eve, expelled from their happy abode, were sent abroad to recommence a new and sterner life. But an existence of honest labour, ennobled by the guiding light of reason, could not be without dignity and happiness. They saw the reluctant earth yield up its hidden treasures; and before their eyes, barren tracts were changed into fields of waving corn. But an additional blessing was granted to them; they became the parents of two sons, Cain and Abel. Pride was mingled with their delight when they looked

upon their children, who were destined to grow into reasonable beings, endowed like themselves with a knowledge of good and evil. Under their care and fondness, the childhood of Cain and Abel passed away. In course of time, Cain became a husbandman, and Abel a shepherd. The brothers, unlike in their occupations, were no less unlike in their dispositions. Cain had to carry on a perpetual struggle with a stubborn and ungrateful soil; it was he who especially felt the curse pronounced against his parents, for he had to work in the sweat of his brow; while Abel had the gentler and easier task of leading his sheep into pleasant green meadows, of watering them at fresh springs, and of reclining near them in the shade of spreading trees. Both brothers, however, saw their work succeed, and gratitude impelled them to bring an offering to God. Cain naturally presented the firstfruits of the field, and Abel the firstlings of the flock. They could hardly express more appropriately their humble conviction that all they possessed belonged to their Creator, as they owed it to His mercy. But though Cain was filled with a proper sense of dependence on the will of God, he could not master his evil passions, when he compared his own hard life with the easy existence of his younger brother. Envy rankled and took root in his breast. An offering presented with such feelings could not be acceptable to God, who looks upon the piety of the worshipper rather than upon the value of the gift. While, therefore, his oblation was rejected, Abel's sacrifice was graced with Divine favour. Now the spark of jealousy in Cain's heart was rapidly fanned: "his countenance fell." But God, the all-seeing, the all-merciful, desiring to draw him from the brink of a fearful precipice of sin, reproved him gently. He asked him why he was angry, and why his countenance was fallen? If his offering was not accepted, ought he not to take it as a sure sign that he had not done

well? He should search his heart, and he would find that it was tainted by a grievous vice. He ought to take heed, or else repentance would come too late. For a time Cain's envious rancour was silenced; he spoke to Abel with brotherly feeling. But when the daily toil recommenced, and the difference of occupations became again painfully striking, the old animosity was revived, and in a moment of ungovernable rage Cain slew Abel.

The first murder was perpetrated: the earth was stained with human blood. That blood cried aloud to the Creator, who said to the murderer, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" Like Eve, his mother, Cain tried to evade the enquiries of God. "I know not," said he; "am I my brother's keeper?" But the Lord replied in just anger, "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood cries to Me from the ground. Thou art cursed from the ground which has opened its mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be on the earth." Thus Cain, like Adam and Eve, was to wander from his first abode, from his paradise, where his parents dwelt, and where he had passed his childhood. But Cain clung to his miserable existence. Guilty as he was, he wished to live. His prayer was granted; but fearing the wrath of some human avenger, he entreated God for protection of his life. This was also conceded to him. He was branded, however, with the mark of the outlaw, that he might be known and shunned. Thus he wandered about without rest and without peace, and at last settled in the district of Nod, which signifies *flight*, and which probably represents one of the eastern countries of Asia, far from the early centres of civilisation, and separated from all friendly communion with the rest of the human families. But gradually even Cain, in some degree purified by hard and persevering labour, found relief and consolation. His wife bore him a son, whom

he called Enoch, which name, meaning instruction, perhaps implied the earnest intention on the part of the sinful father to train his child in the path of virtue, and thus to guard him against those snares of sin that had blighted his own life: and in order to keep that intention more vividly in remembrance, Cain, when he proceeded to build a city in the land of Nod, called it also Enoch after his son. This city was soon peopled by his descendants; and there the energies and talents of mankind were gradually awakened and exercised. The four next generations mentioned in the Bible are represented by the names of Irad, Mehujael, Methusael, and Lamech. Here the narrative pauses to introduce a social progress of peculiar importance.

Lamech had two wives, Adah and Zillah, of whom the former bore two sons, Jabal and Jubal. Jabal was the first herdsman among the descendants of Cain; he was permitted to follow the easy and peaceful occupation of the pious but short-lived Abel; his ancestor's bloody crime was atoned for, and the curse-laden race was free to commence a new and happier career. A decisive beginning was made in that very generation. For Jabal's younger brother, Jubal, is mentioned to have been "the father of all those that use the lyre and the flute": he was the inventor of musical instruments; the toil of the daily labour was lightened and beautified by art. Zillah was the mother of Tubalcain, who was the first to manufacture sharp instruments of brass and iron: thus man was better able to force from the earth the grains that support his life, and the flowers that delight his eye; he in some measure acquired the power of creating by his own exertions a second paradise. But beyond this the descendants of Cain were not permitted to pass; the next and higher steps were reserved to other and purer branches of the human family.

Adam and Eve, bereft of both their children, the younger one slain, the elder an outcast, were alone in their misery. Their punishment seemed indeed hard to bear. But when they were blessed with a third son, they called him Seth, meaning "compensation", and accepted him in the place of the good and innocent Abel. And when Seth grew up, he had a son, whom in humbleness he called Enos, the "frail" or "mortal". But it was in the lifetime of this frail Enos, that one of the most important advances was made in the education of mankind. For then "began men to invoke the name of the Lord." Their spiritual life commenced. They became aware of their insignificance before the Almighty; and they expressed this feeling in prayer.

The Bible passes rapidly over the next generations, those of Cainan, Mahalaleel, and Jared; for a vast field was opened to human energy, and the progress in the inner life is naturally slow and struggling. But the great age which men attained in those periods, materially aided their endeavours. Man had been originally intended for immortal life; Adam and Eve forfeited this privilege; they became mortal, and with them their descendants. But the diminution of their lives was ordained to be gradual; thus Methuselah attained the remarkable age of 969 years, and Noah of 950 years; but Abraham died at 175, Jacob at 147, Moses at 120, and Joshua at 110 years; while the Psalmist exclaims: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if very strong fourscore years."

But in the fourth generation after Enos, the religious efforts and aspirations began to bear fruit. Jared's son, Enoch, was an example of excellence and piety. Even now, after so many thousands of years, he is to us the type of the good and perfect man, who walked with God and in whom God peculiarly delighted. As a reward, he was spared the infirmities of old age and the sufferings

of death; for "Enoch walked with God, and he was no more, for God had taken him away." But it is remarkable that he passed from this life into a happier and brighter existence at a comparatively early age; he died younger than any of the primitive patriarchs — to teach the lesson that a long life is not in itself a blessing, nor an early death in itself a misfortune; but that a long life may be a curse if stained by crime, as was proved by the example of Cain, and that an early death may be the highest favour of God, as was shown by the example of the pious Enoch.

4. THE DELUGE.

[Genes. VI–IX.]

The tenth descendant from Adam was Noah. At his birth, his father Lamech exclaimed prophetically: "This one will relieve us from our work and the toil of our hands, from the ground which the Lord has cursed." The somewhat obscure meaning of these words may be thus explained. It was during the lifetime of Noah that man was first permitted by God to kill for his food the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and to eat the fishes of the sea; he was no longer to subsist merely upon the precarious produce of the land; his hard struggle with the reluctant soil was lightened; and God's first curse, though not repealed, was mitigated. This involved indeed a sad decline of man from that state of innocence, when all the brute creation lived in happy security and freedom; therefore, remembering the harmony and beauty for which the world was designed, we should try to lessen the sufferings which we inflict upon animals either for our subsistence or our self-preservation.

When Noah was 500 years old, he had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. He was a good and pious man,

fearing and loving God, and was unlike all the other inhabitants of the earth, who had gradually become more and more depraved. The disobedience of our first ancestors was aggravated in the succeeding generations. They sinned so constantly and so grievously that at last the Lord repented having created man, who had been destined to form the crown and glory of creation. Of so fearful a nature was the prevailing corruption, that God determined to extirpate all life by a universal Deluge, not only the men but the beasts also, that no trace might remain of that wicked age. Iniquity should not stain God's earth, which was to be regenerated by a miraculous act of Divine interference. For Noah and his family, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord, were to be saved from the general destruction, as the germs of the future population.

It is with feelings of awe that we contemplate God's fearful punishment. We can hardly realise the Deluge, the death of every living creature, the immersion of the whole earth, the dwelling-place of man, in the rising waters sweeping over hill and vale, forest and pasture-land, and engulphing all rivers, lakes, and seas. God revealed His resolution to His servant Noah: "The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them, and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." But as Noah was not to perish with the wicked, God commanded him to build a huge ark of gopher or cypress wood, three stories high, and large enough to receive not only Noah and his sons with their wives, but also two animals of every unclean species, male and female, and seven pairs of every clean species, whether beast or bird or reptile, with the necessary food for the sustenance of all. Thus specimens of the whole brute creation were to be saved with Noah; for God would not altogether destroy the world which He had blessed and pronounced good in all its parts.

Noah built the spacious ark as God had directed; he entered it with his family; and the animals left their green pastures, and their forest homes, and their woody thickets, and came around Noah, who took them into the ark in accordance with God's commands. Noah had attained the great age of six hundred years, when he was to witness a stupendous change, and to bid farewell to the world he had known before. The Deluge commenced on the seventeenth day of the second month. Now torrents of rain descended in floods from the heavens, and the fountains of the deep gushed forth. The seas, the rivers, and the lakes began to swell and overflow, carrying away with them stately trees, and cities, and all works of human industry. Then indeed must man's sinful heart have been smitten with bitter pangs of regret and shame. Did it at last humble itself before the merciful Creator, who had been so long-suffering, so slow to anger? Can we not see even now, after the lapse of thousands of years, those terrible scenes of despair and agony, when men struggled desperately, but in vain, to save their doomed lives by toiling up the towering rocks and rugged mountain peaks? Can we not hear that piercing wail from earth to heaven, as the floods dashed, and foamed, and roared, as the waters, stern workers of their Master's bidding, rose higher than the towering rocks, higher than the rugged mountain peaks? At last the relentless floods covered all living things, and buried all in one appalling grave. No bird, no beast, no human being, could withstand God's judgment. But amid this scene of ruin and devastation, the ark, guarded by the Lord, floated on steadily and securely. During forty days it was borne up by the increasing waters which prevailed upon the earth, overtopping, by fifteen cubits, the loftiest mountain crests.

Then the waters began to decrease, and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, or after exactly five

months, the ark rested over the peaks of Mount Ararat. The country of Ararat, bearing the same name as the mountain, is a part of the beautiful province of Armenia, one of the most fertile countries of the north. "The region around the mountain makes the impression of a dreary and devastated wilderness; it is haunted by bears, small tigers, lynxes, and lions, and is infested by large and extremely venomous serpents, which frequently impede the progress of caravans. . . At a little distance, the summit does not appear particularly imposing; for numerous lower mountains obstruct the view; and the plateau itself, on which it rises, is of considerable height. But viewed from the vast plain which skirts its base, it appears as if the highest mountains in the world had been piled upon each other to form this one sublime immensity of earth and rock and snow. Here the aspect is overwhelming; it awes the mind with the stupendous power of the Creator; the peaks seem to reach into the very heart of heaven, and the sides disappear dimly in the endless horizon." *

The ark, hovering over this mountain range, gradually descended as the water subsided; and on the first day of the tenth month, it rested on its highest peak, which, like other elevated points, began then to emerge from the floods. Here Noah, still imprisoned, looked forth upon the wide-spreading though decreasing waters; and after waiting forty days longer, anxious to know the condition of the earth, he sent forth a raven from the ark. This bird, glad to regain and to enjoy its liberty, and thriving in the humid atmosphere, returned to the ark only to be fed, flitting to and fro, until the waters had quite abated. Yet Noah, anxiously hoping that the floods were disappearing from the land, sent out another bird, and this time a dove. But the dove, more delicate than the raven,

* *Kalisch*, Commentary on Genesis, p. 190.

found no resting-place, and returned to the ark. After seven days it was again sent forth, and now it returned at eventime with a fresh olive leaf in its mouth. Then Noah knew that the earth was almost free from the flood, although still unfit for habitation. After another seven days, the winged messenger was sent out again, and returned no more. Like Noah in the days of old, we still regard the dove and the olive leaf as symbolical of peace and joy. And a feeling of gladness must in truth have filled Noah's heart, for the floods had disappeared from the earth; the Deluge had fulfilled its awful mission. In the beginning of the first month, the surface of the earth was cleared from the waters; and on the twenty seventh day of the second month, or exactly 365 days after the commencement of the flood, the ground was perfectly dry. At the command of the Lord, Noah left the ark, and with him his wife, his sons and their wives, and every living creature that he had saved from destruction. Anxious to testify his thankfulness to God for having preserved him from the universal doom, he built an altar, and presented a stupendous burnt-sacrifice of every clean beast and of every clean fowl. God graciously accepted this offering, and said: "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the cogitation of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again smite any more every living being as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Thus, by a covenant of mercy, the earth was thenceforth to remain unharmed; nature was to continue in her uninterrupted course, and never again was the whole globe to suffer for the sins of man: God promised to measure the deeds of His children not by the standard of justice but by that of compassionate love, and to remember in His judgments the innate weakness of the human heart.

The history of mankind seems to recommence with Noah. Similar to Adam, he was placed by God in a new world, beautiful and blooming, the father of the only family that was to people the earth, the ruler over all living things. But he received more unlimited dominion over the animal world than was ever allowed to Adam: from his time, the brute creation lived in fear of man; and man partially subsisted on animal food. To preserve the remembrance of the original security of all beasts, God prohibited man to eat their blood, which was regarded as their soul or principle of life. And stern was His decree against the shedder of human blood. Murder was to be unsparingly avenged by death; for could a greater crime be conceived than that of destroying a being created by God in His own image? Thus the Lord established for evermore His covenant with Noah, and also with every living creature, that there should never again be a flood to destroy the earth. As a sign of this covenant, the brilliant rain-bow spanned the heavens, bright with the Almighty's promise of mercy to His erring creatures; for God said: "I have set My bow in the clouds, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, that I shall remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh."

Noah's three sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham had not inherited his father's piety; he was guilty of unfilial conduct, which drew down upon him Noah's severe anger. "Cursed," he said, "be Canaan (for Ham was Canaan's ancestor); a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren." But Noah blessed his other two sons, promising large territories to Japheth, and dominion and glory to Shem.

Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood; he was an active husbandman and cultivator of the vine; and when he had witnessed the gradual increase of the human family after its all but total extirpation, he died at the age of nine hundred and fifty years.

5. GENEALOGY OF NATIONS.

[Genes. X.]

The Biblical narrative, interrupting for a short time the history of individuals, pauses to enumerate the generations of the sons of Noah. Shem, Ham, and Japheth were the ancestors of nations, and their descendants the founders of cities and empires. The children of Japheth settled in the northern and western continents of the globe; the progeny of Ham established themselves in the south; and the offspring of Shem were gathered in the central parts of the ancient world. The following list embodies the names of Noah's descendants, together with the tribes, countries, or cities, which they probably represent.

I. JAPHETH, embodying the nations of the North and West.

I. Gomer — The *Bactrians*; Mountain nations.
   1. Ashkenaz — *Rhagae,* in Great Media.
   2. Riphath — *Rhipaean mountains.*
   3. Togarmah — *Taurica* (Crimea).

II. Magog — The *Scythians.*

III. Madai — The *Medes.*

IV. Javan — *Greece;* Maritime Countries.
   1. Elishah — *Hellas.*
   2. Tarshish — *Tartessus,* in Spain.

3. Kittim — *Cyprus.*
4. Dodanim — The *Daunians,* in Italy.

V. Tubal — The *Tibareni* } in Northern Armenia.
VI. Meshech — The *Moschi* }
VII. Tiras — The *Chain of the Taurus.*

II. HAM, including the nations of the South.

I. Cush — Tribes of *Southern Africa* and *Arabia.*
1. Seba — *Meroe,* in Ethiopia.
2. Havilah — *Near the Arabian Gulf.*
3. Sabtah — The *Astabori,* near the river Tacazze.
4. Raamah — Regma, in *Arabia.*
a) Sheba — Saba, in *Arabia Felix.*
b) Dedan — On the *north-western coast of the Arabian Gulf,* and near the *Persian Gulf.*
5. Sabtechah — in *Ethiopia;* perhaps Nigritia.
6. Babel — *Babylon.*
7. Erech — *Orchoe,* on the Euphrates.
8. Accad — *Tel Nimroud,* or Akkerkuf, near Bagdad.
9. Calneh — A town in *Chalonitis* (perhaps Ctesiphon), on the Tigris.
10. Nineveh — *Nineveh,* on the Tigris.
11. Rehoboth Ir — Probably on the *eastern banks of the Euphrates.*
12. Calah — *Kalah Sherghat,* fifty-five miles south of Mosul.
13. Resen — *Nimroud,* seventeen miles south of Mosul.

II. Mizraim — *Egypt.*
1. Ludim — *Letus,* or *Letopolis,* in Lower Egypt.
2. Anamim — Perhaps *Cynopolis,* the town of *Anubis,* in Middle Egypt.

3. Lehabim — The *Libyans.*
4. Naphtuhim — *Napata,* in the north of Meroe.
5. Pathrusim — *Upper Egypt,* or *Thebais.*
6. Casluhim — *Chemnis,* or *Panopolis.*
   a) Philistim — *Philistines.*
7. Caphtorim — *Coptos,* in the Upper Thebaid.

III. Phut — *Phaiat,* or *Libya, near Egypt;* or perhaps Buto, in the Delta.

IV. Canaan — *Syria, Phoenicia,* and *Palestine.*
1. Sidon — *Sidon,* in Phoenicia.
2. Heth — The *Hittites,* near Hebron, Bethel, etc.
3. The Jebusite — In and around *Jerusalem.*
4. The Amorite — On *both sides of the Jordan.*
5. The Girgasite — In the *centre of Palestine.*
6. The Hivite — In *Shechem* and *Gibeon,* and *near the Hermon.*
7. The Arkite — *Arca,* in Phoenicia, at the north-western foot of the Lebanon.
8. The Sinnite — *Sinnas,* near Arca.
9. The Arvadite — The island *Aradus* at the northern coast of Phoenicia.
10. The Zemarite — *Simyra,* twenty-four miles south-east of Antaradus.
11. The Hamathite — *Epiphania,* in Syria.

III. SHEM, representing the central parts of the ancient world.

I. Elam — *Elymais,* in Persia.

II. Asshur — *Assyria.*

III. Arphaxad — *Arrhaphachitis,* in North Assyria.
1. Salah — Along the *eastern banks of the Tigris.*
2. Eber — In the *west of the Tigris and Euphrates.*
   a) Peleg — In various parts of *Arabia Deserta.*

b) Joktan — *Kachtan*, in the north of Ned-sheran.

1. Almodad — In *Arabia Deserta.*
2. Sheleph — The *Salapeni*, in Arabia Felix.
3. Hazarmaveth — *Hadramaut*, in the south of Arabia.
4. Jerah — The *coast* and *mountain of the Moon*, near Hadramaut.
5. Hadoram — Likewise *adjoining Hadramaut*, on the coast.
6. Uzal — *Sanaa*, the capital of Yemen.
7. Diklah
8. Obal
9. Abimael

} Uncertain.

10. Sheba — The *Sabaeans*, in the eastern parts of Arabia.
11. Ophir — On the *southern* or *south-eastern coast of Arabia.*
12. Havilah — Near the *Persian Gulf.*
13. Jobab — In *Arabia Deserta.*

IV. Lud — The *Lydians*, originally living in the highlands of Armenia.

V. Aram — *Aramaea*, including northern Mesopotamia, Syria, and districts of Arabia.

1. Uz — *Ausitis*, in the northern parts of Arabia Deserta.
2. Hul — perhaps *Golan*, in the east of the Jordan.
3. Gether — perhaps *Geshur*, on the Orontes.
4. Mash — The *Mysians.* *

* See *Kalisch*, Commentary on Genesis, pp. 231—233.

6. THE TOWER OF BABEL.

[Genes. XI.]

From the highlands of Armenia, where the ark had rested after the Deluge, the earlier descendants of Noah migrated southward till they arrived in the beautiful and fertile plain of Shinar, situated between the two great rivers Euphrates and Tigris.

Foreseeing the vast increase of the human family, they determined to build a large city with a stupendous tower, to serve for all future time as a centre of unity to mankind. They not only desired to construct an imposing dwelling-place, but they intended to pile up a gigantic tower "whose top might reach to heaven, and by which they might make themselves a name." Thus filled with pride and vanity, they actually began the ambitious scheme. With brick for stone and bitumen for mortar, they pursued their work with vigour, and the town rose rapidly. But the Lord was displeased at their arrogance and haughtiness. Therefore, He confounded their language suddenly, so that they could not understand one another. Annoyed and bewildered, the workmen renounced their labour; and the city, commenced with such proud hopes but never completed, was called *Babel*, meaning *confusion*. Thus the Bible accounts for the perplexing diversity of languages, which thoughtful men might well have deplored as a serious impediment to the brotherly intercourse between nations.

After this sad tale of man's vanity and God's speedy punishment, the Bible returns to the history of Shem. The generations followed each other in quiet succession; they had to re-discover many of the arts lost by the Deluge; but their chief pursuits were probably those of agriculture and cattle-breeding. The representative of the ninth generation after Noah was Terah, who became the father of three sons: Abram (later called Abraham), Nahor, and Haran. Haran

had a son named Lot, and two daughters Milcah and Iscah. But Haran died before his father Terah. Nahor took Milcah for his wife; while Abram married his half-sister Sarai. Milcah bore many children to her husband, but Sarai was childless. This family journeyed together from Ur of the Chaldees, with the intention of emigrating into the land of Canaan, but they stopped on their way at Haran. Here Terah died in the course of time at the age of two hundred and five years.

II. THE HISTORY OF THE HEBREW PATRIARCHS.

[Genes. XII—L.]

7. THE WANDERINGS OF ABRAM AND LOT.

[Genes. XII. XIII.]

Abram lived to his seventy-fifth year in his old Mesopotamian home; but he was to spend the remaining and most eventful portion of his life in distant lands. The first patriarch, the father of the chosen people, descended from an idolatrous family and born in a heathen country, was to leave all the old associations and give up all the old ties which might weaken his faith and courage, and was to wander forth to unknown tribes to establish a new domicile.

"Go out of thy country," said God to him, "and from the place of thy birth, and from thy father's house, into the land which I shall show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless thee, and curse him that curses thee; and in thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed." It was a great and glorious promise, full of glad tidings to unborn generations, the first revelation which God vouchsafed to man since the days of Noah. When Abram, full of faith and obedience, heard the Divine word, he instantly prepared to go — whither he knew

not; it was enough for him that he left a land of superstition and idolatry. With him went Sarai his wife, Lot his nephew, and all the members of his household. They journeyed forth, like all nomadic herdsmen, driving their flocks and their herds before them, with their tents slung on poles.

Arriving in Canaan, he passed through the land, till he halted for the first time in the vale of Shechem. It may have been the remarkable beauty of the spot which induced the patriarch there to pitch his tents, and to rest for a while beneath the oaks of Moreh. "Here", so tells us the traveller Van de Velde, "here is no wilderness, no wild thicket, but always verdure, always shade, not of the oak, the terebinth, and the coral tree, but of the olive grove so soft in colour, so picturesque in form, that for its sake we can willingly dispense with all other wood. Here is no impetuous mountain torrent, yet water in more copious supplies than anywhere else in the land; and it is just to its many fountains, rills, and watercourses, that the valley, which in some places does not exceed a hundred feet, owes its exquisite beauty." But apart from the attractions of the scene, the fact of the plain of Shechem lying in the very centre of that country which was finally to belong to the descendants of the patriarch, may have suggested to him the propriety of pitching his tents within its groves; and there, where idolatry prevailed, he built an altar to the one true, eternal God. And there the Lord appeared to him, with the renewal of the old promises.

Again the patriarch wandered on, taking the direct southern high-road of Palestine, and rested near the town of Bethel. Here also he built an altar, invoked the name of the Lord, and thus consecrated to Him an idolatrous city before called Luz. But he soon left Bethel to wander again southwards; for as yet he had fixed upon no per-

manent resting-place. Whilst on this journey, a famine broke out in the land, one of the terrible scourges and trials, by which eastern countries are so frequently visited. Egypt, that rich and fruitful land, long known as the store-house of the world, was now the aim of the patriarch's wandering.

He had arrived with his caravan on the confines of Egypt, when he was troubled by a strange fear. Sarai his wife was of remarkable beauty; might not one of the nobles of Egypt, nay the king himself, with true eastern despotism, kill him in order to obtain her? A deception, considered harmless by Abram, and deemed necessary to avoid that calamity, presented itself to his mind. He said to Sarai: 'Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister, that it may be well with me for thy sake, and my soul may live because of thee." As Abram had foreseen, the Egyptians were struck by his wife's beauty, which was probably of a much higher order than that of their own countrywomen. Her praise reached the ears of Pharaoh. Eager to see the stranger, he ordered her to be brought before him. She must have found favour in his eyes; for Abram was kindly treated for her sake, and received rich presents of men- and maidservants, of sheep and oxen, asses and camels. But the displeasure of God fell upon Pharaoh, who by terrible plagues was warned of the sin he was tempted to commit. In just anger, the heathen king, feeling that he had been ensnared by untruth, summoned Abram before him, and indignantly exclaimed: "Why didst thou say, she is my sister, so I might have taken her to me to wife: and now behold thy wife, take her and go thy way." Abram heard in silence this merited rebuke, and humiliated by the generosity of the heathen king, he took his wife, his household, and his vast possessions, left Egypt, and returned to the south of Canaan.

Perhaps impelled by gratitude, and stimulated by growing faith, he went once more to Bethel, to the place where

he had before built an altar to God, and there he again worshipped by prayer. At this consecrated spot, the tents were again unfurled, and the numerous herds and flocks of Abram and Lot grazed around, spreading over miles of country.

But the patriarchs had not long encamped, when a strife arose between their herdsmen. The district did not yield sufficient pasture for the cattle of both, for it was occupied by Canaanite tribes also. Abram's peaceful spirit was saddened by these dissensions, and forgetful of his own higher claims, he said to his nephew Lot: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou will take the left hand, then I shall go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

Abram and Lot were standing on the height near Bethel, and from this point they gazed over a wide extent of country. To the east, they saw before them the range of hills above Jericho, the wide valley of the Jordan, and the distant plain of Moab; to the west and south, their eyes were met by the bleak hills of Judah, and the future site of the city of Jerusalem, while to the north was the luxuriant land of Samaria.

They looked down into the fruitful and blooming valley of the Jordan teeming with vegetation and rippling with delicious streams: it was indeed like the garden of Eden, or like the rich land of Egypt they had just left; but the people of these lovely districts "were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly". Lot made his choice unhesitatingly; and separating himself from his generous and unselfish kinsman, he journeyed eastward, and finally pitched his tents near Sodom.

Abram, left alone in his encampment near Bethel, received from God another of those promises so full of hope and gladness. He was bidden to lift his eyes to the north and south, the east and west; for all that land should belong to him and to his descendants for ever — from the valley of the Jordan in the east to the shores of the Mediterranean in the west, from the Arabian tracts in the south northwards to the heights crowned by the cedars of Lebanon. And great and numerous should his progeny be, for thus sounded the Divine pledge: "I shall make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then thy seed shall also be numbered. Arise, pass through the land, in its length and in its breadth; for to thee I shall give it."

Thus commanded by the Lord, Abram journeyed southwards, and dwelt in the oak-groves of Mamre, in the fertile plain of Hebron. This town is surrounded by elevations which include the highest peaks in the mountain ranges of Judah; and its vicinity is even now rich in vineyards and orchards, wells and blooming pastures, numerous herds and flocks. Here among the beautiful groves, Abram consecrated another altar to the Lord who so mercifully guided him.

8. THE INVASION OF THE EASTERN KINGS.

[Genes. XIV.]

The peaceful life of the patriarchs was to be interrupted by the din of warfare and the dangers of battle. In the plain of the Jordan there were five cities, probably belonging to the earliest settlements of the Canaanites — Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Bela or Zoar. These cities had been conquered by Chedorlaomer, the powerful king of Elam, in the east of the Tigris. For twelve years they paid tribute to him, but in the thir-

teenth they rebelled. Incensed at the growing independence of the subdued cities, the great king of Elam resolved upon speedy chastisement; and summoning the aid of three neighbouring kings, he marched forth from his territory, intent upon conquest and destruction. Crossing the Tigris and Euphrates, and sweeping along on the great military road south-westward, the allied monarchs subjected in their impetuous march cities and nations; they seemed invincible. They gained their first victories in the land of the Ammonites; then passing the river Arnon, they continued their conquests in the province of Moab, in the land of the Idumeans, and even in the impregnable mountain fortresses of Sin, the strongholds of the ancient Horites. Further still they pressed onward to the very border of the wilderness which divides Arabia from Egypt, devastating and slaughtering as far as the Oasis of Paran. The victors then turned in their course, and descended upon the valley of the Jordan, the proper object of their expedition. The five cities trembled with terror at the approach of the relentless conquerors. Yet anxious to resist the invaders to the last, the five kings marched out at the head of their armies, and met the enemy in the valley of Siddim, near the dangerous bitumen pits, which they hoped would entrap the unwary and restless strangers. A desperate battle was fought. The four eastern kings, stimulated by success and supported by superior strength, overpowered their unfortunate opponents, and partially ensnared them in the very bitumen pits, which were to have become their own graves. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled in trembling haste towards the mountainous tracts of Jericho, leaving their rich possessions in the hands of the conquerors. And great as the spoil, was the number of the wailing captives of war who followed the triumphant march of the returning kings.

Amongst these captives was Lot, Abram's nephew, who had remained in Sodom, his chosen place of residence. Abram was in his oak-groves of Mamre, far away from these turbulent scenes of ambition and bloodshed, when a messenger, who had escaped from the battlefield, arrived with the tidings that his kinsman was a prisoner, a slave of the great king of Elam. The patriarch instantly resolved upon his rescue. He did not stay to consider the overwhelming numbers and the superior skill of arms, against which he would have to contend; but summoning Mamre and his two brothers, and the men of his household consisting of 318 tried and faithful servants, he led them on to the pursuit. It was a daring act, but it proved Abram's firm belief in God's help and justice.

The kings were marching northward, and had already arrived at Dan, the extreme northern boundary of the land. At nightfall, the patriarch descried the foreign hosts; he divided his men into three bands, and rushed upon the enemy. We are told no details of this memorable encounter; but as in after-ages, the heathens were defeated by the worshippers of the true God. They fled, pursued by Abram as far as Hobah, to the west of Damascus. The booty must have been large indeed; for it consisted of all the plunder which the four kings had extorted from the numerous cities they had conquered.

Laden with this wealth, and accompanied by Lot and his released fellow-captives, the conquering patriarch returned towards his home. In the valley of Shaveh he was met by one of the princes of Sodom, who came forth with Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. This is the first mention we have of Jerusalem; for doubtless Salem was the germ of the future holy city, and Melchizedek, its ruler, impressed by the example of Abram's pure life, had probably renounced idolatry and was strugg-

ling towards truth and enlightenment. In accordance with his priestly office, he brought bread and wine, the symbols of worldly success and religious purity, and gave them to Abram, adding to this typical offering a blessing so true and so simple that it might have come from the lips of the patriarch himself: "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth, and blessed be the Most High God who hath delivered thy enemies into thy hand." To Melchizedek were presented the tithes of all the booty—a foreshadowing of the law which assigned the tenth part of all produce to the Levites. The prince of Sodom then gratefully offered to Abram the whole of the spoil he had brought back: but the patriarch, unwilling to be enriched by the wealth of idolators, refused everything "from a thread to a shoe-latchet"; but he permitted his faithful allies Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre to take their due portions.

The great eastern kings and their armies, like the five tributary cities and their princes, now disappear from the scene, and we are again led back to the oak-groves of Mamre whither Abram at once returned, and to the revelations of God to His faithful servant.

9. GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM AND THE BIRTH OF ISHMAEL.

[Genes. XV—XVII.]

It was night when the word of the Lord came in a vision to Abram; it came as it had come before to strengthen his faith and his hope by glorious promises: "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield; thy reward will be very great." But Abram answered the Lord despondingly and with a bitter outburst of sorrow. "Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, since I go childless, and the proprietor of

my house will be Dammesek Eliezer?" What could that great reward be, if a stranger were to succeed him as the master of his household? It was the first word of complaint that had fallen from Abram's lips, the first doubt in God's unfailing truth. The answer full of comfort came to him forthwith, that no stranger should be his heir, but his own child. To enhance the force of these words, the Lord called Abram from his tent, and bid him look upwards to the heavens. Brilliantly beautiful, more beautiful than we in our western lands can imagine, is an eastern night; the sky is of a deeper blue; the air lighter and purer and laden with fragrance; the stars shine with a more resplendent, and yet a softer light. We see the figure of the patriarch standing at the door of his tent, gazing upwards and listening to the Divine words: "Look now towards heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them; so shall thy seed be." Thus encouraged, Abram grew stronger in faith, and he believed in God. But lest he be uncertain to whom he was to look for the fulfilment of the great promise, God spoke again: "I am the Lord who brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it." Yet Abram relasped into his doubts, and forgetting that nothing is impossible to the Divine will, he asked for a sign to assure him of the certainty of the promise. Full of mercy for human weakness, God granted the prayer. It was, as it is still, an eastern custom to ratify treaties and compacts by killing animals and dividing them in pieces, through which the contracting parties pass. In accordance with that custom, God commanded Abram to slay a heifer, a she-goat, and a ram, each three years old, together with a turtle-dove and a young pigeon, to divide the quadrupeds, and to place the halves opposite each other. Birds of prey came down upon the flesh; but Abram scared them anxiously away. Yet at nightfall, a

profound sleep came upon Abram, and again a vision was vouchsafed to him, but this time one not altogether of a comforting nature. "Know of a surety", said the Lord, "that thy seed will be a stranger in a land that is not theirs — and will serve them, and they will afflict them — four hundred years. But that nation also which they will serve, I will judge, and afterwards they shall return hither, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." As the voice of the Lord ceased in the midst of the dense darkness, a flame of fire descended upon the sacrifice; and while the animals were consumed, the Lord repeated solemnly: "To thy seed have I given this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates — the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaim, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

But Abram was still childless, and saw no heir to his house but his servant Eliezer. Now Sarai had a handmaid, called Hagar, an Egyptian woman; this maid she gave as a second wife to the patriarch, and at last his long cherished wish seemed about to be realised. But Hagar, so favoured by God, despised her mistress, and distrust and jealousy sprang up in Abram's peaceful household. Sarai appealed at last, in terms of angry reproof, to her husband, who would not step between his wife and her servant, but relying upon Sarai's sense of justice, merely said, "Behold, thy maid is in thy hand, do to her as it pleases thee." But the unfortunate Hagar was ill-treated by her mistress, and fled from Mamre, determined to return to her own country. She wandered on southwards from Hebron to the desert of Shur, and stayed, to rest and to refresh herself, at a fountain in the wilderness. Here an angel of the Lord appeared to her, asking, whence she had come and whither she was bound? She answered in all the bitterness of her spirit, "I

flee from my mistress Sarai." Then the angel of the Lord bid her return again to her mistress and humble herself before her. But Hagar must indeed have rejoiced at the promise then conveyed to her by the words of the Lord; for the angel continued: "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. Behold, thou wilt bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard thy affliction; and he will be a wild ass of a man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell before all his brethren" — the true and pithy description of the Bedouin, bold, lawless, undaunted, and free. Full of amazement at this strange but glorious prophecy, Hagar called the name of the well *Beer-lahai-roi,* that is, the well where she had seen the Divine presence and yet lived. She returned forthwith to Mamre, where her child was born. Abram, then eighty-six years old, in his joy and gratitude called the child *Ishmael,* or "God has heard me."

In due time all that the angel foretold of Ishmael's descendants was realized: the Arabs have indeed been, as they still are, comparable only to the zebra of the deserts which they inhabit. "Against them alone time seems to have no sickle, and the conqueror's sword no edge. They have defied the softening influence of civilization, and mocked the attacks of the invader. Ungovernable and roaming, obeying no law but their spirit of adventure, regarding all mankind as their enemies, whom they must either attack with their spears, or elude with their faithful steeds, and cherishing their deserts as heartily as they despise the constraint of towns and communities: the Bedouins are the outlaws among the nations. Plunder is legitimate gain, and daring robbery is praised as valour. Liberty is the element which the Arabs breathe; and if they were thrown into servitude, they would either break the

yoke or perish in the attempt. They cannot indeed be better compared than with a wild ass... They may be hunted like game, but they cannot be caught; their wants are few, they neither covet wealth, nor tempt the conqueror's avarice; and the waste tracts shunned by other nations, are their terrestrial paradise. 'In the desert everybody is everybody's enemy,' is their proverbial saying; and they express, therefore, only in other words, the sense of our text: 'his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him.' Their love of liberty is frequently carried to the utmost pitch of unbridled ferocity; they seek danger for its own sake; they delight in the excitement of combat and pursuit; and even among themselves, sanguinary feuds are often carried on during centuries; the fearful custom of avenging of blood has a decided influence upon their characters; it renders them suspicious and vindictive; it teaches them cunning and treachery; and the cruelty and bloodthirstiness which it engenders, arm friend against friend, and relative against relative. Thus the prediction of our text has also its sad application: the Bedouin's hand is uplifted not only against the unwary pilgrim who happens to traverse his deserts, but against the descendants of his own tribes, and against those who speak his own tongue."*

Abram was being constantly comforted and strengthened by Divine revelation; few of his descendants were so frequently favoured with visions, were so incessantly reminded of the fulfilment of the Divine promises. He had no outward symbols of faith. No holy Temple, no sacred Ark, no regular worship or sacrifice were there to attest the presence of God; but the spirit of the Lord dwelt among the oak-groves of Mamre.

When Abram had attained the age of ninety-nine years, the Lord appeared to him again, repeating the assurance

* *Kalisch*, Commentary on Genesis, pp. 378, 379.

He had so often given him before. But no longer satisfied with a passive faith, since He intended to conclude a covenant with the patriarch, He exhorted him at the same time "to walk before God and be perfect." Abram, awed by the Divine presence, fell upon his face, and God spoke to him, saying, "As for Me, behold My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of a multitude of nations, and thy name shall no more be Abram but Abraham, for a father of a multitude of nations I have made thee."

The name "Abram", meaning only great father, was altered into "Abraham", father of a numerous progeny — a change which implied that the appointed time was drawing near, when God's promises were to find their first fulfilment. To strengthen the covenant between the Lord and Abraham, the rite of circumcision was commanded as a Divine law.

Sarai now received for the first time the direct blessing of God; hitherto she had been called Sarai, "the struggling woman", because she had "contended" with her childlessness; but henceforth she should be known by the noble and proud name of "Sarah", Queen: "I shall bless her", said God, "and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her."

But Abraham marvelled at the promise and doubted. He could not believe in that child of his old age, and he tremblingly said to God: "O that Ishmael might live before Thee!" But God mercifully repeated His promise: "Indeed Sarah thy wife will bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant with his seed after him." And remembering Abraham's plaintive cry, the Lord said: "And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee; behold, I have blessed him, and I shall make him fruitful and shall multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I shall make him a great nation."

But the glory of transmitting the name of the true God from generation to generation was to be the blessed inheritance of Isaac, the child whom Sarah should bear in the ensuing year.

10. THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH.

[Genes. XVIII—XX.]

Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent in the heat of the day, when he saw three men approaching. Rejoiced to find an opportunity for exercising the duties of hospitality, he welcomed the strangers cordially. He pressed them not to pass his tent, but to rest beneath the shade of the trees, whilst he fetched water to wash their feet, and bread for refreshment. No servant was to assist in preparing the strangers' meal, but Sarah herself, the wife of the great emir, baked the cakes of fine flour, while Abraham hastened to the herd, choosing a young and tender calf, which was made ready without delay. Cream and milk were added to the repast, of which the guests partook in the presence of Abraham.

The strangers were messengers of God sent to repeat the old promise, but with greater distinctness: "I shall surely come again to thee at the return of this season; and behold, Sarah thy wife will have a son." Sarah had meanwhile stayed in the tent, where unseen she heard the angel's words. She laughed within herself at the promise; she had but little faith in the Divine power. But the voice of God reproved her for this lack of confidence: "Why did Sarah laugh? Is anything too difficult for the Lord?" Sarah, ashamed and afraid, stammered forth a denial, "I did not laugh", whereupon God said, "Nay, thou didst laugh."

The heavenly messengers then rose and went in the

direction of Sodom. As a mark of courtesy towards his parting guests, Abraham accompanied them on their way. Since the battle of the eastern kings, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah had grown in wickedness so exceedingly, that God had decreed their immediate destruction. He communicated this intention to Abraham, His faithful servant. The patriarch heard the announcement with grief and dismay; and impelled by his spirit of justice and mercy, he made this request to the Lord: "Supposing that fifty good men lived in the city of Sodom, would not God spare the place for the sake of the fifty? That be far from Thee to do in this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And the Lord said: "If I find fifty righteous men within the city, I shall spare all the place for their sake." But this was not enough for Abraham: might not the wickedness be even greater than he had imagined? Perhaps there were no more than forty-five good men in Sodom; no more than forty, or thirty, or twenty, or even ten? God listened graciously to each fervent supplication of the patriarch, and granted it; He readily accepted the prayer coming from a pure and faithful heart. The city of Sodom should not be destroyed if it contained but ten righteous men.

Two of the angels who had visited Abraham's tent at noon, came to Sodom in the evening. Lot was sitting in the gates of the city. Just as the Forum of Rome, or the market-place of the medieval towns, was the general resort for old and young, as the village green is even now in our own hamlets, so are the gates of the city the usual place of assembly among eastern tribes, where the people meet for business or pleasure. For there is usually the court of justice, there the vendor sells his goods, the news of the day are discussed, the law is read, and there, in the towns of Judah and Israel, might often have been heard the warning

voice of the prophet. Lot resembled his kinsman Abraham in genuine hospitality. At the approach of the strangers, he rose, bowed his face to the ground, and pressingly entreated them to be his guests, till they yielded and repaired with him to his house. The stranger was considered sacred in the eyes of the host; the duty of hospitality had, in the east, grown into a law. But the people of Sodom, steeped in sin, determined to make Lot suffer for his display of benevolence. They gathered before his door, audaciously demanding the strangers to be given up to them. With much of the courage of the great patriarch, Lot went forth from his house, and faced the incensed multitude. Those who had accepted the shelter of his house, he could on no account permit to be harmed. But the crowd was more enraged against him than against his guests, they taxed and taunted him with an insolent assumption of superiority, and pressing round him, attempted to break open the door of the house. But the angels, who had come to rescue Lot and to try the Sodomites, put forth their hands, brought Lot in safety back to the house, and struck the multitude with blindness, so that they groped in confusion about the door.

It had thus, alas, been proved that the wickedness of Sodom was indeed very great, and that there were not even ten righteous men in the city. The destruction was, therefore, determined upon by God. Lot alone, belonging to the family of Abraham, and having shown generosity, fearlessness, and charity, was to be saved, and with him his wife, his two daughters, and the two men of Sodom to whom his daughters were betrothed. But the frivolous and depraved minds of his intended sons-in-law were unable to comprehend the danger; they wantonly and mockingly refused his only means of their deliverance. It was the last morning that was ever to dawn upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot was urged by the angels to depart with his family;

but still they lingered, till the angels, seizing them by their hands, led them out of the walls of the doomed city. Here they were enjoined to pursue their way steadily and without looking back, eastward beyond the district of the Jordan. But Lot trembled, and entreated of the Lord to let him take refuge in the small town of Zoar, which was near Sodom, a place so poor and insignificant that it could hardly have incurred the Divine anger. His request was granted, and the town of Zoar escaped destruction. The sun rose in his full glory over the earth, when the wanderers arrived at their place of refuge; at the same moment brimstone and fire descended from the heavens upon Sodom and Gomorrah and upon the plain of the Jordan. Lot's wife, curious to see the fate of the cities she had left, disobeyed the Divine command, and looked behind her. The punishment followed instantaneously; she was changed into a pillar of salt. Lot ultimately left Zoar, and he and his descendants inhabited the provinces of Moab and Ammon.

Abraham, remembering God's gracious promise, repaired early in the morning to the spot where he had prayed to the Lord on the previous day. The blooming valley was hidden by smoke; giant furnaces rose from earth to heaven where the proud cities of the Jordan had stood; and the wild flames were rapidly consuming the land. When the devastation was complete, when the labour of man, the vegetation of the once fruitful soil, and man himself had been destroyed, a vast lake of salt and asphalt or bitumen lay in the east of the desert of Judah.

The Dead Sea is one of the marvels of the earth. All eastern travellers who visit its shores, gaze with a sad curiosity upon this lifeless and dreary region. The soil has a burnt appearance, the gravel is almost black, and the trees in the neighbourhood are encrusted with salt. No flocks or herds can pasture in those desolate tracts, birds fly anxiously

over the surface of the lake, but hardly ever find a resting-place in its neighbourhood. Mysterious in its origin, the Dead Sea will always retain that fascination over man, which the wonderful and inexplicable never fail to exercise, and it would be strange indeed if a deep feeling of religious awe did not strike into the pilgrim's heart when he stands beside the tombs of the cities buried by the Lord because of their exceeding wickedness.

After this fearful catastrophe, Abraham left Mamre, where his tents had been pitched for so long a time, and wandered southwards, staying at different places between Kadesh and Shur, until he came at last to Gerar in the territory of the Philistines. Here the same strange scene was enacted as before in the land of Egypt. Abraham, doubting the protection of God, represented Sarah as his sister, and not as his wife. Abimelech, like Pharaoh of Egypt, sent for the stranger and was on the point of taking her for his wife, when he was saved from committing that sin by God's merciful interposition. Abimelech, the heathen king, was a virtuous and pious man; he restored Sarah to Abraham, justly reprimanding him for his deception, and enquiring into the motive of his conduct. The patriarch excused himself by saying that he thought he was travelling in a wicked and godless country, where he might be slain for his wife's sake; and that Sarah, although his wife, was indeed by birth his half-sister. Generous like the Egyptian king, Abimelech loaded Abraham with presents, even inviting him to dwell in whatever part of his land he might choose. But he strongly recommended him in future to take precautions that Sarah should be fully known and recognised as his wife.

11. BIRTH OF ISAAC AND EXPULSION OF HAGAR.

[Genes. XXI.]

The hundredth year of Abraham's life had commenced, when the fulfilment of God's promise came as it had been predicted. A son, who received the name of Isaac, was born to Abraham, the heir to his rich possessions, the heir to the blessings vouchsafed by God to the race of the patriarch: he was to transmit the worship of the true God to future generations. Sarah who had shown so little faith, had a glorious old age; God had indeed blessed her; she now felt that she was justly called Sarah, the mother of nations. Isaac grew from an infant to a child, and Abraham gave a great feast on the day he was weaned.

Ishmael, the son of Hagar, now a youth about sixteen years old, felt bitterly towards his brother Isaac, the chosen heir of his father, and he openly mocked him. Sarah's spirit was roused; she had never loved the child of the bondwoman, though she had tolerated him within her tent. Now full of pride and jealousy, she resolved upon expelling Hagar and her son from the home which had sheltered them so long. Just as sixteen years ago she had pleaded her cause before Abraham, so she pleaded it again. The patriarch's gentle spirit felt the injustice of Sarah; he loved his son Ishmael, although he knew that to Isaac belonged the privileges of the firstborn. But God commanded Abraham to listen to the voice of Sarah; while He promised His Divine protection to Ishmael also, who was to be like Isaac the father of a great nation. Abraham, obedient as usual to the behest of the Lord, rose early in the morning and sent Hagar and her son from his tent. His heart must have smitten him as he gave her bread for the journey, and slung the skin of water over her shoulder. The bondwoman, leading her son

by the hand, set forth upon her weary way, and came to the desert region near Beer-sheba, evidently taking the direction of her native Egypt. Here the trials of the wanderers commenced. The water in the skin was spent, and thirst began to torment them. Thirst in the parched and sandy desert, where the heat is oppressive, and the foot aches with the burning soil, is indeed the height of agony. Ishmael, fainting from weariness and exhaustion, seems to have felt this fearful torture more strongly than his mother. Hagar, taking her son in her arms, placed him beneath a shrub, and, in woful despair, sat down at some distance from him, for she said: "I will not see my child die." What a scene of sadness — mother and son lying down to die in the wilderness! And Hagar lifted up her voice and wept. God heard that cry of anguish, and He called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her: "What aileth thee, Hagar?" Then followed words of reassurance and comfort, sweet words to the bleeding heart of the poor fugitive: "Rise, take the boy, and hold him by thy hand, for I shall make of him a great nation." God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw before her the cool and delicious waters of a fountain; she hurried to it, and filling the skin gave her son to drink.

Ishmael grew strong and powerful, and lived in the district of Paran: the wild desert was his home, the bow his weapon, and liberty the soul of his existence. His mother chose for him an Egyptian wife, one of her own country-women.

Abraham continued to dwell in the land of Gerar, and concluded a covenant of peace with king Abimelech. The latter was soon called upon to prove his peaceful intentions towards Abraham. Among nomad chiefs, whose wealth consists mainly of flocks and herds, the possession of a well is of the utmost importance. Abimelech's servants had vio-

lently taken away the well of water which the patriarch had dug for his own use; as soon as the king heard of this act of injustice, he ordered his men at once to restore the well. To ratify the covenant, Abraham offered up a sacrifice, and called the place where the vows of friendship had been exchanged, Beer-sheba. He moreover marked the spot by planting a tamarisk, and he there worshipped the Lord, the everlasting God.

12. INTENDED SACRIFICE OF ISAAC.

[Genes. XXII.]

Faith in God and obedience to His commands were the two noblest and brightest qualities in Abraham's character. From the early days of his wanderings, he had evinced with few exceptions a steady and unflinching reliance and trust. He had left his own house, he had given up his family ties, to journey into a strange land. He had pitched his tents in the south and the north, in Egypt, in Hebron, and in Gerar, and wherever he went he invoked the name of the Lord. He had proved himself a warrior, and had defeated mighty armies. He had pleaded on behalf of the doomed cities; he had seen the anger and the mercy of the Divine Judge. He had delighted in the youthful Ishmael, and had yet without murmuring sent him forth with his mother. But greater than all previous struggles, was the final trial imposed upon him whilst dwelling in peace and prosperity, the friend of the king, and honoured as a nomad chief in the land of the Philistines. Had the Bible only recorded this one act of faith, Abraham would be transcendently great in his obedience; but relating it as the last and the severest of his tests, it gloriously crowns a long and virtuous life; it gives the finishing stroke to the picture of sublime and childlike

trust. The event is narrated in the Bible with inimitable beauty and simplicity.

"And it was after these things that God tried Abraham, and said to him, Abraham; and he said, Behold here I am. And He said, Take now thy son, thy only one, whom thou lovest, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee. And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clove the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose, and went to the place which God had told him. On the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar."

We must pause a moment to refer to that place seen on the third day by Abraham. The land of Moriah was doubtless the district round about the city of Jerusalem, and the hill was that later hallowed by the Ark of the Covenant there deposited by David, and by the Temple which was there erected by Solomon. The spot destined to be the dwelling-place of God's glory, was consecrated by the grandest act of piety and faith.

When Abraham saw the mountain from afar, he felt that the time for the sacrifice was at hand; so "he said to his young men, Remain here with the ass, and I and the youth will go thither, and we will worship and return to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and the knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac said to Abraham his father, and said, My father; and he said, Behold here I am, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" To that question so terrible to the father's tortured heart, the answer was given untainted by despair, breathing faith alone: "My son, God will look out for Him-

self a lamb for a burnt-offering." The text continues: "And they went both of them together; and they came to the place which God had told him; and Abraham built there an altar, and arranged the wood, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to kill his son."

It was enough; Abraham had been tried, and had shown himself worthy indeed of the great and holy mission God had entrusted to him. The sacrifice, although not offered in reality, had been accepted by the Lord, and the horror of shedding the blood of his dearly beloved son was spared to the patriarch. Thus it was proved that God detests human sacrifices even if meant to testify the most ardent piety; and the Law is inexorable in denouncing them as an abomination. Abraham had been ready to sacrifice his dearest hopes, his paternal love, his brightest promises when he raised the knife to kill his son; could God require more? The angel of the Lord stayed his uplifted hand, and called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. And He said, Lay not thy hand upon the youth, nor do to him anything; for now I know that thou fearest God and hast not withheld thy son, thy only one, from Me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked; and behold, in the back-ground a ram was entangled in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering instead of his son." The place was now sacred to the Lord; Abraham gave it the name of *Jehovah-jireh* (the Lord will see or select), which also implied that on this mount the Lord's nation would be seen, worshipping on the spot where their great ancestor had so nobly fought and conquered. After this marvellous act of faith, and when Isaac was restored to his father, the Lord called again from heaven and repeated those promises and hopes which had so often been given to the patriarch,

the promise of numberless descendants, of great possessions, of conquest over the enemy, and of blessings that would come to all the nations of the earth through his seed.

Exalted and comforted by these assurances, Abraham returned with Isaac, and they went together to Beer-sheba.

13. DEATH AND BURIAL OF SARAH.

[Genes. XXIII.]

Sarah was a hundred and twenty-seven years old when she died, not at Beer-sheba, but at Hebron where the patriarch had once more pitched his tents, and where he mourned and wept for her. Although he had dwelt so long in Canaan, he owned no foot of ground; but he was anxious to purchase from the Hittites a burial place which was to belong to his descendants for ever. The people of the land, however, who venerated and loved the patriarch, entreated of him to bury his dead in any one of their own sepulchres, for none would refuse him this privilege. But Abraham declined their offer; he went to the gates of the city where the people were assembled, and begged of Ephron, the son of Zohar, to sell him the cave of Machpelah for a burial ground. Ephron desired Abraham to accept the cave together with the whole field of which it formed a part as a gift, but artfully intimated that he valued it at four hundred shekels, probably an exorbitant price. Abraham, without pausing to consider the sum, weighed to Ephron the silver which he had named, and took rightful possession of the field and the cave which lay before Mamre. The piece of land bought of the heathen by Abraham in the presence of all the children of Heth, was now considered a hallowed spot; there Sarah was buried, and afterwards Abraham and the later patriarchs.

14. REBEKAH.

[Genes. XXIV.]

Abraham was advanced in years, and his strength was declining. But he had been greatly blessed by God in all things. When his son Isaac was forty years old, he longed to find a wife for him, fit to become the mother of nations, the mother of God's elected people. No woman of Canaan was worthy of such a destiny. Therefore, Abraham called Eliezer, the faithful servant of his house, and pledged him by a solemn oath, not to take a wife for his son from among the daughters of the Canaanites, but to choose one from his own family in his Mesopotamian home, whither he was at once to proceed. Eliezer, conscious of the great importance of his mission, asked what he should do if the maiden refused to follow him: should he take Isaac to the land of the Euphrates? But this Abraham positively forbade, mindful that Canaan was the land of Divine promise, and implicitly believing that the angel of the Lord would lead Eliezer's steps; but should the maiden not consent to follow him, then he was freed from the obligations of his oath. So Eliezer set out upon his errand of trust in such a manner, as became the messenger of a great nomad chief. His caravan consisted of ten camels which were required for himself and his companions, and for the numerous and costly presents which he took with him for Isaac's future bride and for her family. He journeyed eastward until he came to Mesopotamia and saw the city of Nahor in the distance. He halted towards the evening at the principal well without the gates of the city, at the time when he knew the women would come out to draw water. Full of eagerness to accomplish his mission, and knowing how completely Abraham had ever been under the direct guidance of God, he determined to yield unreservedly to the direction of the

Divine spirit, and to act strictly as God might show him. And he said: "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water: and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water. And let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink, and who will then say, Drink, and I will give water to thy camels also; let her be she whom Thou hast appointed for Thy servant, for Isaac; and thereby *I shall know* that Thou hast shown kindness to my master." As Eliezer ended his words, there came from the gates of the city a comely maiden. She descended to the well and filled her pitcher. Eliezer at once approached her, and said: "Let me, I pray thee, taste a little water of thy pitcher." Full of courtesy, she not only cheerfully acceded to the request, but proposed, with kindly zeal, to draw water for the camels also. Eliezer wondered in delighted silence, and stood looking at the maiden as she drew the water from the well, emptying her vessel into the trough, and then resuming her task until all the camels were refreshed. Her goodness and activity made him hope that she was the destined bride of his master. So he took a nose-ring and bracelets of gold, and placing them in Rebekah's hands, asked: "Whose daughter art thou?" and wishing to test her with respect to that great eastern virtue, hospitality, he added: "Is there room in thy father's house for me to stay in?" The maiden's answer rejoiced Eliezer: "I am," she said, "a daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor;" and she continued with evident pleasure: "We have both straw and provender enough, and room to stay in." The Divine guidance had thus not forsaken the faithful servant, pious and godfearing like his master.

Rebekah returned at once to her father's house, and

showing the presents related her meeting at the well. When her brother Laban heard it, he hastened to the spot, where he found Eliezer with his caravan. He accosted him with gentle politeness and sincere hospitality: "Come, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore dost thou stand without? and I have cleared the house, and there is room for the camels." Thus saying he led the way to the city, and received Eliezer and his whole caravan into his house. Straw and provender were brought for the camels, and a meal was speedily prepared for the travellers. But the faithful servant would not taste food before he had performed his mission. He related with touching simplicity the motives and the whole history of his journey to Mesopotamia, beginning his narrative by a description of the greatness and the wealth of his master Abraham, and then giving a detailed account of the important charge entrusted to him, of his solemn oath, of his arrival at the well, of his prayer to God, of the appearance of Rebekah, and of the wonderful fulfilment of the prayer. And in conclusion he said: "Now if you will do kindness and truth to my master, tell me: and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left." Bethuel and Laban, struck by the evident interference of God throughout the narrative of Eliezer, felt that Rebekah was indeed destined to become the wife of Isaac, the beloved of God; so they readily consented to her departure. Eliezer, in a transport of delight and gratitude, now produced his presents—costly garments and glittering trinkets of gold and silver for Rebekah, and valuable gifts for her brother Laban and for her mother. Then commenced the feast, and at last the faithful Eliezer retired to rest after the fatigues of the eventful journey. But early the next morning, he begged of his hosts to let him return to his master. He would not even consent to a delay of a few days; and although the bride's parents wished her to remain a short time longer

in the home of her youth, he entreated for an instant departure. At this urgent request, Rebekah was asked whether she would go; and she answered: "I will go." So the maiden was blessed by her relatives, and the caravan set forth again, Rebekah attended by her nurse and her maids, as behoved the sister of the wealthy Laban.

Isaac, still sad at heart for the loss of his mother, was wandering out in his fields at evening, absorbed in meditation. He lifted up his eyes and saw a line of camels approaching from the distance. Rebekah had also perceived the solitary figure in the field, and had respectfully alighted from her camel. When told that Isaac was before her, she covered herself with her veil. Eliezer then related to Isaac the strange history of his journey: "and Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife, and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

15. DEATH OF ABRAHAM; BIRTH AND YOUTH OF ESAU AND JACOB.

[Genes. XXV.]

Abraham had attained the good old age of a hundred and seventy-five years when he died. The two brothers Isaac and Ishmael met to mourn for their father. The wild huntsman came back from the desert to the tents at Gerar, and forgetting their ancient strife and animosity, the brothers fulfilled together their last melancholy filial duty. They buried the patriarch by the side of Sarah in the cave of Machpelah. The Bible mentions six other sons of Abraham born to him by another wife, Keturah; these sons, after receiving gifts from their father, were sent to the extreme east, and did not share the inheritance of Isaac. Ishmael, the mighty man of the desert, became the father of twelve

great nomad chiefs. They took up their abodes in all parts of Arabia, and intermarried with the daughters of the native people. They became the ancestors of the roaming Bedouins of the desert, and of the sheikhs who dwell in towns and villages; their descendants spread all over the Arabian peninsula, some living in Arabia Felix, others between Arabia Proper and the Syrian Desert, others taking possession of the heights of Ituraea, or wandering in the tracts of Arabia Deserta.

Ishmael died at the age of a hundred and thirty-seven years, honoured by the numerous and powerful clans which had gradually sprung up at his side.

Isaac had been married twenty years and as yet no children had been born to him. Grieved and depressed, he prayed earnestly to God that Rebekah might be blessed with offspring. God heard the supplication, and Rebekah became the mother of twin sons, who were called Esau and Jacob. Before their birth, it was revealed to her that these sons should be the fathers of powerful nations, but that the elder should be under the dominion of the younger. Though twins, they were utterly unlike one another, and as they grew in years, this difference became more and more striking. Esau resembled Ishmael in vigour of person; he was fond of danger and adventure; he loved the chase and wandered forth day after day, absorbed by his favourite pastime. Jacob, on the other hand, was pensive and gentle like Isaac, "a righteous man dwelling in tents". But Isaac loved his eldest son Esau, and ate of the venison which he brought home from the chase, while the younger and more peaceful son was the favourite of the mother, who perhaps kept in faithful remembrance the promise that the righteous Jacob was to rule over his brother.

One day Esau returned from his usual exciting pursuit, wearied and worn by his toils. His younger brother

Jacob had a dish of lentils before him, a tempting meal for the tired hunter. Esau eagerly begged for the "red, red pottage", which he longed to devour. Jacob, calm and self-possessed, probably despising the coarseness of his brother Esau, was determined to take advantage of his exhaustion. Therefore, he said shrewdly, "Sell me to-day thy birth-right." Esau, fainting with hunger, cared at that moment little for his natural privileges, as Jacob's keen penetration had divined. He ceded to him his right of seniority, and confirmed the cession by an oath. Then he received the much wished-for pottage, and "he ate and drank, and rose, and went away, and despised his birth-right."

The Bible tells this remarkable transaction in the shortest and simplest manner. A few pithy lines suffice to show us the weary huntsman falling into the net of his crafty brother, and the sacrifice of the rights of primogeniture or the satisfaction of the moment. We cannot help condemning Jacob: yet though we pity Esau, our pity is weakened when we see his utter indifference to all the higher prerogatives of his birth; he did not possess the qualities essential to a descendant of Abraham, the destined father of a holy nation; he was as unworthy as he was unmindful of propagating the noble truths entrusted to his race; but although this was evident to the more cultivated and more aspiring Jacob, he debased himself in the eyes of God by trying to fulfil the prophecy of his birth by his own unjustifiable means. For Jacob, unlike Abraham, was insincere and ambitious; great sorrows and manifold trials were necessary to elevate his faith and purify his life.

16. ISAAC IN GERAR.

[Genes. XXVI.]

Once again there was a famine in the land, just such another scourge as there had been in the days of Abraham, when he wandered southward into Egypt. But Isaac was commanded by God not to enter into that country of superstition and idolatry; so he left Beer-Lahai-Roi, and went to Gerar to the king Abimelech, who had been so devoted an ally of the great patriarch. Before Isaac set forth with his vast possessions, God blessed him and promised to fulfil all the pledges He had given to Abraham — "because Abraham obeyed My voice, and observed My observances, My commandments, My statutes, and My doctrines." So Isaac settled in Gerar; but like his father Abraham, he dreaded the people's recklessness, and apprehended they might kill him for the sake of his beautiful wife Rebekah. So he resorted to stratagem and made her pass for his sister. But his true relation with Rebekah was discovered; and as before, the worshipper of the true God was reproved by the heathen king. Abimelech not only allowed the patriarch to dwell in his land, but gave him his powerful protection. Thus in Gerar Isaac's numerous tents were pitched, and his flocks and herds grazed in undisturbed tranquillity.

Meanwhile the two brothers Esau and Jacob grew in years and in vigour. We may suppose that Esau followed the chase with the Philistine hunters; while Jacob dwelt among the tents, and cultivated the rich and blooming land which rewarded the husbandsman's industry a hundredfold, and was an unfailing source of wealth and influence.

When the Philistines saw the stranger becoming "exceedingly great", they envied him and showed their ill-feeling by trying to vex and molest him. As a rich herdsman, Isaac must have taken possession of a large number of wells,

which were of course indispensable for the maintenance of his cattle. Most of these wells had been dug by the servants of Abraham who had jealously guarded them from the herdsmen of Abimelech. But the envious Philistines, not daring to make an open struggle for the wells, had secretly stopped them up with earth. Abimelech, foreseeing serious contentions, said to Isaac: "Go from us; for thou art mightier than we." Peaceful and animated by goodwill towards the king, Isaac left the district which was yielding him such rich harvests, and went down into the valley of Gerar, where he fixed his abode. But here again the wells became a cause of strife: the Philistines had stopped up those which Abraham had dug, so that the herdsmen of Isaac had to recommence their labours. And when at last the refreshing springs burst forth from the depths of the valley, the herdsmen of Gerar claimed the water as their own. Isaac gave to the well the appropriate name of *Esek* (contention), and with his usual meekness he left it to commence his work afresh. But again the native herdsmen took possession of the well which Isaac called *Sitnah* (strife). Anxious to avoid further dissensions, he removed to another part of the valley, where he again dug a well. This time his gentle forbearance was rewarded, he was not annoyed by the Philistines, and he gave to the happy spot the name *Rehoboth* (enlargement), exclaiming with pious gratitude, "For now the Lord has enlarged us, and we shall be fruitful in the land." Near this spot was Beer-sheba, where Abraham and Abimelech had made their covenant of peace. Here the great patriarch had built an altar to God and had invoked His name. At this sacred place, Isaac was favoured with a Divine vision: the Lord appeared bidding him to be firm and fearless, for he was blessed as the son of Abraham. Beneath the shade of the tamarisk-tree which his father had planted, he built up an

altar where he paid homage to the name of the Lord, and there he remained and there again he dug a well. Whilst living at Beer-sheba, in his quiet and sacred retirement, three powerful men came to him, the king Abimelech, his councillor Ahuzzath, and the general of his army Pichol. Isaac, astonished at their arrival, at once imagined some evil design and asked distrustfully, "Wherefore do you come to me, and you hate me, and have sent me away from you." But the king came in peace and friendship. Convinced that Isaac was under the special protection of the Lord, he longed for his alliance; therefore he renewed with him the covenant which he had made before with Abraham. As a sign of friendship the Philistines ate and drank with the patriarch, and before their departure on the following morning, they swore fidelity one to another. In commemoration of the oath, the well dug at that spot was called Shibah, harmonising with Beer-sheba, the name of the city. The two sons of Isaac, who had evidently lived with their father in the land of the Philistines, are not mentioned in all these transactions; but Esau must have dwelt much among strangers, for he chose for himself two wives, Judith and Basemath, both Hittite maidens, daughters of idolators. He thus estranged himself more than ever from the chosen family, and brought by his unhappy choice grief and sorrow upon Isaac and Rebekah.

17. THE BLESSING OF ISAAC.

[Genes. XXVII.]

The Bible, although it is the story of the chosen people, although it tells us of the wonderful blessings conferred by God upon the patriarchs, upon those men who handed down the worship of the true and everlasting God from generation

to generation, never omits recording the errors and the failings of the favoured race or of the founders of its glory; it does not seek to extol that which deserves condemnation; nor does it try to excuse what is open to censure or scorn. Jacob was called the righteous man; he possessed the superior refinement of soul and the elevation of mind necessary for the heir of his father's great spiritual treasures; he was, like Isaac and Abraham, to be the elected of the Lord, guided by Him, blessed, strengthened, taught by Him. But Jacob was not graced by the purity of heart, the grand and simple faith which distinguished Abraham, nor by the gentle and pious self-denying spirit of Isaac. The story of the pottage by which he purchased the birth-right, is followed by another incident more painful still for those who would fain love and venerate the grandchild of Abraham, the father of Joseph.

Isaac had become an old man stricken with years. His eyes were dim so that he could not see, and he felt that his life was waning. So he wished to give to his firstborn Esau his blessing before he died. It was and still is the custom among eastern nations to ratify compacts and covenants by a meal; and hence, when a parent is about to bestow upon his child his final blessing, which in some respects partakes of the character of a covenant, the same means of ratification is not unusually adopted. Therefore, the aged patriarch called his son and said: "Behold, I pray thee, I am old, I know not the day of my death: and therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field and hunt for me some venison; and make me a palatable meal, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless thee before I die." — Away sped the hunter Esau to do his father's bidding. But Rebekah had listened in the seclusion of the tent when Isaac spoke, and in a moment her resolve was

taken. Esau should not receive the blessing, which, as she believed, belonged even from his birth to her younger and dearer son. She went to Jacob, and hastily related to him what she had heard, and then she continued, "Listen to my voice, according to that which I command thee. Go, I pray thee, to the flocks, and fetch me from there two good kids of the goats, and I will make them a palatable meal for thy father, such as he loves. And thou shalt bring it to thy father, and he may eat, that he may bless thee before his death." Jacob heard this wily scheme, not with indignation or repugnance, but with a fear that it might not be successful. Esau was a hairy man, and Jacob a smooth man: would not the blind father, when stretching forth his hands towards his child, discover the deception, and would then the blessing not be changed into a curse? Rebekah was the bolder and more resolute spirit, she replied to Jacob's hesitating doubt, "Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice and go and fetch the kids for me." She was prepared for any emergency. The animals were killed, and a palatable meal such as Isaac loved, was soon ready. Then she dressed her younger son in the festive garments of Esau, and to render the resemblance perfect, she covered his smooth neck and hands with the skins of the kids. She then put the meal into his hands, and sent him to his father.

The patriarch, aged and infirm, was reposing on his bed when Jacob appeared before him. "Who art thou, my son?" asked the blind man. — "I am Esau, thy firstborn, I have done as thou badest me: rise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me." At that voice, so unlike the voice he had anticipated, Isaac's suspicions were aroused, and he asked: "How is it that thou hast found so quickly, my son?" Surprised by this unexpected question, Jacob in trembling haste added blasphemy to deceit, for he

answered: "Indeed the Lord thy God brought it in my way." But Isaac was far from satisfied. "Come near," he said, "I pray thee, that I may feel thee whether thou art indeed my son Esau or not." Then he touched him with his hand, and with a feeling of distrust still lingering in his mind, he exclaimed, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are Esau's hands." How touching, how sad are the words of the poor blind father, as he put the last searching question to his treacherous child, "Art thou indeed my son Esau?" And Jacob, unmoved and unabashed, answered firmly, "I am." Isaac could no longer cling to his suspicions and anxious forebodings; he ate of the meat and drank of the wine. Then he embraced Jacob, and bending over him, smelt the perfume of his garments, of the garments of his hunter son. "Many parts of Arabia and Palestine exhale a most delicious odour; after a refreshing rain especially, the air is perfumed with a fragrance inexpressibly sweet; and the soil furrowed by the plough-share emits often the balmy treasures hidden in its depths." Thus the garments of Esau, the man of the field, who roamed through hill and valley, were redolent of the scent of aromatic herbs; they called up in Isaac's mind the pictures of freshness, health, and abundance; his spirit, moved and struck, assumed a prophetic elevation as he began the blessing, "See the odour of my son is like the odour of a field which the Lord has blessed." And he continued:

"And God may give thee of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth, and abundance of corn and wine.

"Nations will serve thee and peoples will prostrate themselves before thee.

"Be lord over thy brothers and let thy mother's sons prostrate themselves before thee.

"Cursed be those who curse thee, and blessed those who bless thee."

It was the spirit of the Lord that put these words into the mouth of the patriarch, words that were literally fulfilled; for he promised to his son's descendants a land rich and beautiful, waving with cornfields and covered with vineyards, the holy land, the land of Palestine; he moreover gave him the pledge of complete dominion over the stranger, the Canaanite, and over the children of Esau, the Edomites. — Jacob received this blessing and departed.

He had hardly gone out from his father's presence, when Esau appeared within the tent. He carried a dish of venison in his hand, and bringing it to Isaac, said: "Let my father rise and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me." — "Who art thou?" exclaimed Isaac with a sad misgiving of evil. — "I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau." Then the unfortunate father was overwhelmed with grief, for he knew that the precious benefits he had bestowed could not be revoked; the voice of God had spoken within him. "I have blessed Jacob", he said, — "and he shall certainly be blessed!" Esau, at these words of his father, burst into a cry of anguish, and he said: "Bless me also, o my father." His brother Jacob had twice deceived him; he had taken away his birth-right and his blessing; and had not Isaac reserved words of comfort for him also? Esau urged his request upon his father with all the vehement passion of his nature, he could not bear to think that those aged hands should not rest upon his head, that those revered lips should not open to bless him, the eldest child. Isaac answered and said: "Behold, I have made Jacob thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants, and with corn and wine have I supported him, and what then shall I do to thee, my son?" Without envy, without animosity to his brother, but full of disappointment and genuine affection, Esau exclaimed in a burst of tears: "Hast thou but one blessing, my father?"

Then Isaac spoke again, spoke as the prophetic spirit urged him:

"Behold, without the fatness of the earth shall be thy dwelling, and without the dew of heaven from above.

"And by thy sword shalt thou live; yet shalt thou serve thy brother.

"But when thou truly desirest it, thou shalt break his yoke from thy neck."

These words truly revealed Esau's future history. In striking contrast with the fair and fruitful land of promise, is the tract of country near mount Seir, which was to belong to the descendants of Esau, the Edomites. It is a rocky and barren region, one of the most desolate and sterile parts of the globe. Those valleys alone which are on the frontiers of Palestine are capable of tolerable cultivation. As the Ishmaelite was to live by his bow, so the Edomite was to subsist by his sword. The people of Edom, fierce and warlike, kept up a bitter and constant feud with the Israelites. The conflict began before Palestine was conquered; Saul marched into their territory; David carried on a sanguinary war against them, and stationed garrisons in their land, though, in Solomon's time, they attempted a revolution under the leadership of Hadad. After the division of the empire, they remained subject to Judah, but under the reign of king Joram (B.C.890), with a return of their old spirit of independence, they broke their yoke, proclaimed their own king, and remained free for a considerable time. Under Ahaz (741), they even invaded Judea, and enjoyed complete liberty, until they were at last subjected by the Chaldean conquerors. Thus the prophecy of Isaac was realized in the distant future, as Esau himself, the wild and impetuous man of nature, was a type of his descendants, the Edomites.

The grieved and wounded spirit of the elder brother

now burnt with hatred against Jacob; in his passion he felt as if he could slay his brother, although he knew the agony which such a deed would cause his father. Rebekah heard with dismay the anger of Esau; fearful for her favourite son, she bid him flee from Beer-sheba, and wander to the home of her youth, to her brother Laban, who still lived in Haran. There he should remain in safety until Esau's wrath was calmed down. Then appealing to Isaac, she urged him to allow his son to depart; for might he not, if he stayed in Canaan, marry a Hittite maiden, as Esau had done, and thus make her own life a burden? Isaac shared her apprehensions and her feelings on this point; he, therefore, readily consented, recommended his son to take a wife from the daughters of Laban, and dismissed him with a fervent and affectionate benediction: "And may God the Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest inherit the land of thy sojourn, which God gave to Abraham." — So Jacob departed for Padan-aram. When Esau heard of the blessing of Isaac and of the solemn injunction upon Jacob not to marry a Canaanite, he felt that his own two Hittite wives were offensive to his parents; and desirous to please them, he chose another maiden, a daughter of Ishmael, one of his own kinswomen, and made her his third wife.

18. JACOB'S JOURNEY TO MESOPOTAMIA.

[Genes. XXVIII.]

We have seen how Jacob, partially by cunning and skill, partially by more spiritual and higher yearnings, won for himself his brother's birth-right and his father's blessing. We now follow him on his journeys, as he goes forth armed with that prudence which never forsook him, and with that energy which enabled him to struggle against adversity and

hardship. And yet, although Jacob had not the sublime faith of Abraham, or the pious obedience of Isaac, he stood under the special protection of the Lord, because he was to be the propagator of the true faith. Jacob left the south of Palestine and turned towards Mesopotamia, towards the land whence Abraham had emigrated. The day waned, and night found the young wanderer in an open field before the town Luz, still within the territory of Canaan. Weary from his journey, he took stones for his pillow, and lay down to rest; and with the earth for his couch and the bright starlit heavens for his canopy, he fell asleep. And in his rest, he was favoured by a marvellous dream. A vast ladder seemed to rise beside him, whose foot rested upon the earth and whose top reached to heaven. Up and down this ladder ascended and descended the angels of God. From above came the voice of the Lord, as it had come to Abraham and Isaac, giving promise and strength: "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee shall I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread to the west and to the east, and to the north and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with thee, and I shall guard thee wherever thou goest, and shall bring thee back into this land; for I shall not leave thee until I have done that of which I have spoken to thee." When Jacob awoke out of his sleep he felt the profound reality of his dream, and he exclaimed, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not;" and he was afraid and said, "How awful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." And he called the town instead of Luz Beth-El "the house of God," a name which has since been applied to every sanctuary throughout the world. Jacob's words,

"The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not," have a peculiar fitness. "There is indeed in the region round Beth-el nothing to indicate the Divine Presence; no *religio loci,* no awful shades, no lofty hills. Bare, wild rocks, a beaten thoroughfare; these are the only features of the primeval sanctuary of that God, of whom nature itself there teaches us, that if He could, in such a scene, so emphatically reveal Himself to the houseless exile, He is 'with him', with his true servants everywhere, and will 'keep them in all places whither they go.'" * The stone that had been Jacob's pillow, was sanctified by the vision of the night. Jacob set it up for a memorial, anointed it with oil, and thus it became an object of veneration for many later ages. The sacred narrative constantly returns to it, and we shall see Beth-el re-appear in future centuries as one of the holy places of the kingdom of Israel, where the grossest idolatry was practised. Before Jacob left the spot, he offered up a vow promising true and faithful worship to God and devoted charity to man. "This stone", he declared, "which I have set for a monument, shall be a house of God, and of all that Thou wilt give me, I shall surely give the tenth part of it to Thee."

19. JACOB'S SOJOURN WITH LABAN, HIS MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN.

[Genes. XXIX—XXX. 24.]

Jacob departed from the solitary field, and traversing the desert tracts in the east of the Jordan, he at last drew near to the town of Nahor. A well, surrounded by herdsmen with their cattle, showed him that he was approaching the dwelling-place of man. The shepherds came from Haran, and were of course acquainted with the wealthy Laban. Whilst they were answering the questions of Jacob, they

* *Stanley*, Sinai and Palestine, p. 220.

saw advancing towards them Rachel, the daughter of Laban, driving her flock of sheep before her. Like Rebekah, her occupations led her out into the field; like Rebekah, she was respectful and courteous towards the stranger. Now, the shepherds were obliged to delay the watering of their flocks until all the herdsmen of the neighbourhood had assembled; for it was only by their united efforts that the heavy stone, which covered the mouth of the well, could be rolled away. Jacob, however, was determined to show by an act of attention his friendship for his kinswoman. When, therefore, Rachel approached, he went to the well, and with his own unaided strength performed the feat of removing the ponderous stone. Filled with tenderness for the child of his mother's brother, Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. Then he told her, that he was the son of Rebekah, her father's sister. Placing full reliance in the stranger, she at once hastened home to inform her father of his arrival. Laban, the cordial and hospitable Laban of old, came forth to the well to meet his kinsman, and to bring him back as the honoured and loved guest of his house. He was delighted with his young relative, and exclaimed, "Surely, thou art my bone and my flesh." But Jacob, full of strength and activity, could not bear to eat the bread of idleness; he took part in all the occupations of the house and the field, and Laban felt that, in all justice, his kinsman should not serve him without a reward.

Laban had, besides Rachel, another and older daughter, Leah. But Rachel was very beautiful, while the eyes of her sister were weak and dim. Jacob loved Rachel, and he offered to Laban to work for him during seven years, if, at the end of that time, he received Rachel for his wife. Laban apparently assented to the proposal, and replied, "It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should

give her to another man; abide with me." "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days for the love he bore to her." The time for the marriage had approached; but Laban felt vexed and disappointed that the younger sister should marry before the elder. With the deceit worthy of his sister Rebekah, Laban bethought himself of a scheme by which he might substitute Leah for Rachel. Shrewdly taking advantage of the long and thick veil worn by the Eastern maiden on her marriage day, he brought Leah, thus closely shrouded, to the unsuspecting Jacob, who learnt the dishonesty of Laban too late. As he had deceived his father, so his own kinsman now deceived him. When he upbraided Laban, the latter sheltered himself under vain excuses: "It is not done so in our place to give the younger before the elder." But he proposed that Jacob should celebrate his marriage-week, and that he might then take Rachel as a second wife, and work for her another seven years. Jacob, unwilling to renounce the maiden whom he had loved so long, agreed to this unjust demand, and in seven days he married Rachel also. In accordance with the eastern custom, each daughter received her maid-servant; Zilpah was given to Leah, and Bilhah to Rachel.

Jacob's love for Rachel was true and strong; he never could quite forgive the deception of Laban, and although Leah blessed him with offspring, and Rachel remained childless, still he clung to the younger sister with greater fondness than to the elder. Leah felt bitterly the indifference of her husband, so bitterly indeed that at the birth of her firstborn son, Reuben, she exclaimed, "Surely the Lord has looked upon my affliction, for now my husband will love me." But that love was still denied her; and when a second son, Simeon, was born to her, she said again, "Surely the Lord has heard that I am hated, and He has given me this

son also." But the affection she so longed for was even now withheld; for when she became the mother of a third son, Levi, she gave utterance to her deep attachment in the words, "Now this time will my husband be joined to me, for I have born him three sons." Jacob's heart must have been touched at last, for Leah was full of joy and gratitude when she exclaimed at the birth of her fourth son, Judah, „This time I will praise the Lord." After a long interval she had two more sons, Issachar and Zebulun, and last of all a daughter, Dinah. Moreover, the two maids, Bilhah and Zilpah, bore children to Jacob; the sons of Bilhah were named Dan and Naphtali, those of Zilpah Gad and Asher. — Rachel had envied her sister Leah, and full of sorrow and vexation, she vented her disappointment in words of anger. God remembered her at last, and when she became the mother of a son, she called him Joseph, exclaiming in gladness, "God has taken away my reproach; may the Lord add to me another son!"

Jacob had served Laban long and faithfully. During the fourteen years he had lived with his kinsman, the house of the latter had been blessed and had prospered, and his wealth and possessions had vastly increased. Jacob now felt that the time had come for him to return to Beer-sheba; he had never received from Rebekah the message which, at his departure, she had promised to send him. He was ninety years of age and still an exile and a servant. So he entreated of Laban to let him depart. Laban, fully appreciating the advantage of Jacob's services, could not bear the thought of losing them. Therefore, he offered him any reward he might propose. Jacob bethought himself of a stratagem by which he hoped to secure the finest portions of Laban's flocks. He succeeded so well that in six years he found himself the master of very considerable wealth. The Bible, after detailing the scheme of Jacob,

which is another stain upon his character, tells us that "he increased exceedingly, and possessed much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses."

20. JACOB'S FLIGHT, AND HIS TREATY WITH LABAN.

[Genes. XXXI.]

The unprecedented increase of Jacob's property, and the corresponding diminution of his own, must have opened Laban's eyes with regard to the fraud of which he had been the victim, and he naturally regarded Jacob with suspicion and distrust. Indeed the latter felt, that he could no longer dwell in Padan-aram with safety. The voice of the Lord bid him at once return to his native country. So he sent for Leah and Rachel to meet him in the fields where he was tending his flocks. There he told them that they must prepare for immediate departure. "I see", he said, "your father's countenance that it is not towards me as in former days; but the God of my father has been with me, and you know that with all my power I have served your father." Then accusing Laban of deceit and injustice, he spoke of the Divine protection which was granted to him, and through which, in spite of the stratagems and frauds of Laban and his sons, he had obtained great wealth. Quite unconscious of the deep-laid schemes of their husband, Leah and Rachel readily agreed to follow him to the land of his birth, and spoke of their father with cold harshness: "Are we not regarded by him as strangers? for he has sold us, and has also entirely eaten up our money. Indeed all the wealth which God has taken from our father, it belongs to us and to our children: and now whatever God has said to thee, do."

Jacob proceeded forthwith to carry out his departure or rather his flight. The time was peculiarly favourable.

Laban had gone forth to shear his sheep. Rachel, who still clung to the superstitious idolatry of her youth, took with her as a protection the Teraphim or house-gods which belonged to her father, and which she knew he valued highly. Secretly and in precipitate haste the caravan passed out of the city; first Leah and Rachel with their children; next their handmaids and their children, all sitting upon camels; and then followed Jacob with his train of servants, driving his vast herds and flocks before them. As their road lay westwards, they crossed the Euphrates, and turned their steps toward the range of the mountains of Gilead. On these rich pastures Jacob's herds and flocks grazed for a time whilst he pitched his tents and rested on the mountain.

In the mean time, Laban had been informed of the flight, he at once set out in pursuit, and found Jacob and his companions in the region of Gilead, after a seven days precipitate journey. Here he halted for the night at the foot of the mountain, and was visited by an awe-inspiring vision. The Lord warned him that he should take care not to harm Jacob in any way. With this solemn bidding still ringing in his ears, Laban appeared before his son-in-law. He was full of indignation and anger, and could with difficulty govern his passion. He burst forth directly into accusations, which were indeed well merited by Jacob's cunning conduct: "What hast thou done, that thou hast deceived my heart, and carried away my daughters, like captives taken with the sword?" He then upbraided him for having fled secretly and deceitfully; he said that Jacob had acted foolishly in not telling him his intentions, whereas he would willingly have sent him away with song and music he had not even permitted him to kiss his children and grand-children before they left him, perhaps for ever. He added, with ill-repressed anger, that it would be in his

power to do him injury; yet he refrained from revenge because the God of Abraham had spoken to him in the night and had warned him against violence. And he concluded by urging that if Jacob had departed, because he longed for his father's home, it was certainly inexcusable that he had stolen his gods. Jacob, with a self-possession that never forsook him, was resolved not to humble himself before Laban. He knew that he had acted wrongly, but he pleaded falsely: "Indeed, I was afraid; for I said, perhaps thou wouldst take by force thy daughters from me;" and then, conscious of his innocence with regard to the theft of the Teraphim, which Rachel had taken without his knowledge, he vehemently and with uncalled-for exaggeration demanded justice of Laban: "With whomsoever," he said, "thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our kindred, search what is with me and take it to thee." Laban's investigation for the treasured Teraphim was fruitless. Rachel had hidden away the image in the litter of her camel; and the true daughter of a crafty father, the true wife of a crafty husband, had seated herself on the litter, and remained there sitting during the search. Now Jacob believed he had a right to burst forth into angry invectives against Laban; he had been wrongfully accused; his innocence was clear: had he not been a good and faithful servant of Laban for twenty years? had he not increased the wealth of his kinsman by working for him incessantly and unweariedly? "Thus I was," he exclaimed; "in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes; and thou hast changed my wages ten times: had not the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the fear of Isaac, been with me, indeed thou wouldst now have sent me away empty; God has seen the affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight." — These last words of Jacob must have powerfully impressed Laban;

they probably brought before him the solemn vision of the night, and he felt that he must bow before the will of the Lord, even if the agent of that Divine will was unworthy of the love and protection he enjoyed. With a sudden generosity and goodwill, which would else be inexplicable, Laban answered: "The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day to these my daughters, or to their children whom they have born? And now come, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee."

The proposed reconciliation was effected, and the altar was raised by the two kinsmen. Laban gave it the Chaldee name *Jegar-sahadutha*, and Jacob the Hebrew appellation *Gal-ed*, both meaning Pile of Witness. Here a feast was prepared, and here Laban and Jacob swore to each other friendship and peace. Leah and Rachel were to remain the only wives of the patriarch, and never was Jacob to invade the territory of the Aramaeans. The proceedings were ratified by the invocation of the name of the Lord and by a sacrificial meal.

Early on the following morning Laban bid farewell to his children and grand-children, blessed them, and departed to return to his home. The name of Laban now disappears from the sacred narrative, and the country of Mesopotamia falls into the background, as Jacob proceeds to the land of Palestine.

Journeying along from Mizpah in Gilead, angels met him on his path. He felt that God's presence accompanied him, the place was hallowed in his eyes, and he gave to it the name of *Mahanaim* or the Double Camp. The future sanctity of the spot was foreshadowed by the appearance of the angels; for in later ages Mahanaim became one of the towns set aside for the Levites.

21. JACOB AND ESAU.

[Genes. XXXII. XXXIII.]

Jacob's first thoughts on returning to the home of his youth were directed upon his brother Esau whom he had so grievously wronged. He was near his territory; and it was not unnatural that he should be seized with misgivings and fear. Therefore, he sent men into the country of Edom with this message to the great lord Esau: "Thus says thy servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now; and I have oxen and asses, flocks and menservants and womenservants, and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy eyes." The messengers returned from Edom with the alarming intelligence that Esau had set out to meet Jacob at the head of four hundred men. Surely this foreboded angry strife and hatred: so thought Jacob. He was trembling with consternation. But even then his prudence did not forsake him. He divided his people and his possessions into two distinct camps; so that, if Esau should smite the one half, the other might escape. And then, feeling that safety and deliverance were in the hands of the Lord alone, he prayed to God, and his prayer was full of humility and true contrition: "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, o Lord who saidst to me, Return to thy country and to the land of thy birth, and I will do well to thee; I am too little for all the mercies and for all the truth, which Thou hast shown to Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, the mother with the children. And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for

multitude." Then, anxious to propitiate Esau, he sent a present to his brother with true oriental magnificence. Numerous servants were entrusted with vast droves of cattle — flocks of sheep and goats, camels with their young, herds of bulls and cows, and asses with their foals. Five hundred and fifty animals were thus separated into divisions, which under the charge of servants followed one another at intervals. Esau, advancing in his march, would thus be constantly met by the generous bounty of Jacob, and each servant was bidden to repeat, on Esau's enquiry, the same words: "They are thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold he is also behind us."

Jacob himself did not quietly await the arrival of his brother, but proceeded onwards chiefly at night, as the heat prevented travelling by day. He crossed the ford of the river Jabbok with his wives and children and maidservants, and then prepared to pass the remainder of the night alone in retirement and meditation. In that one night, when he felt that the next day might bring him disgrace or death, the story of the sins and misdeeds of his whole life must have passed before him. It was a night of agony, of conflicting feelings, of prayer and humiliation.

There an event happened which is best related in the words of the Bible itself: "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the rising of the morning dawn. And when He saw, that He did not prevail against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was brought out of the joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, Let Me go, for the morning dawn rises. And he said, I will not let Thee go, unless Thou bless me. And He said to him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Thy name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel; for thou hast obtained the mastery with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And

Jacob asked Him, and said, Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name. And He said, Wherefore dost thou ask after My name? And He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place *Peniel* (Face of God), for, said he, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

Israel is indeed a great and significant name: Jacob, meaning the *second*, was changed into Israel or the *first;* the former may be understood as the *deceiver*, the latter implies the *conqueror*. Israel, sanctified and forgiven, but still the man of trials and sorrows, was to commence a new life. "The children of Israel" is the name which was given to the chosen people, and "Israelites" was the proudest appellation borne by the warriors who conquered nations, when they walked in the fear of the Lord. As an external sign of the night's suffering, the thigh of Jacob was displaced, and he halted.

At early dawn, Jacob who had passed over the Jabbok proceeded southward on his journey. How glorious was the scene that lay before him in the morning sun! In the distance he saw the heights of Lebanon, the blue waters of Galilee, then the plains of Esdraelon, the woods of Carmel, the Mediterranean sea, and the whole range of Judah and Ephraim. It is still considered by travellers one of the finest views in the world.

But a sight more heartstirring, more touching to Jacob than that glimpse of the land of Palestine, must have been the advance of Esau, as he came to meet him at the head of his four hundred men. Still trembling before the anger and power of his brother, he judiciously divided his household into groups — first he placed the handmaids with their children, then Leah with her children, and last of all the beloved Rachel with her son Joseph — thus trying to expose those he loved most to the least danger. He himself took his position in front, and humbly prostrated himself

seven times to the ground before his brother. But Esau, his heart overflowing with affection at the sight of Jacob, forgetful of the past, seeing in him only the exiled brother, the companion of his youth, ran to meet him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. The two brothers wept for gladness. Seeing the groups of women and children standing awe-struck and trembling behind Jacob, Esau asked, "Who are those with thee?" Jacob answered, "The children whom God has graciously given to thy servant." Then the women and children came near, and they all prostrated themselves before Esau. True to his generous nature, Esau felt unwilling to accept the magnificent presents of his brother. He asked, "What meanest thou by all this procession which I met?" To which Jacob answered, "These are to find grace in the eyes of my lord." But Esau said, "I have much, my brother; keep that which thou hast to thyself." Jacob, however, insisted, "No, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy eyes, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore have I seen thy face, as I have seen the face of God, and thou hast been gracious to me. Take, I pray thee, my blessing which is brought to thee: because God has been merciful to me, and because I have everything." Thus urged, Esau accepted the flocks and herds, and begged of his brother to let him accompany him in his journey through the land of Seir. But Jacob, perhaps with a glance of distrust at the four hundred armed men, and clinging to his old caution, replied, "My lord knows that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds are young with me: and if the men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant, and I will lead on in my usual slow pace, according to the cattle which is before me, and according to the children, until I come to my lord to Seir." But Esau, unwilling that Jacob should pass unprotected through a

dangerous country, urged again, "Let me, I pray thee, leave with thee some of the men who are with me." Jacob, however, was anxious to be freed from the guard of Edomites; alone as he had journeyed from Mesopotamia, he wished to proceed through the land of Palestine. So the two brothers parted in peace and goodwill, Esau returning to Seir, and Jacob continuing his route in a south-western direction. Whether he ever paid the promised visit to Esau in the land of Idumea, is not related in the Bible. But the brothers' reconciliation was perfect, and we find them later meeting again in sincere friendship.

Jacob, advancing through the narrow valley of the Jabbok, arrived at the river Jordan. Here he pitched his tents, and rested for a while, building for himself a house and erecting booths for his cattle. The place was subsequently named Succoth, from these booths. — We do not know how long the wanderers stayed in the beautiful valley of the Jordan; but they arrived at last safely near the city of Shechem, where Abraham had dwelt and where he had built the first altar in the Holy Land. — Jacob, the wanderer and the exile, seemed now to have found a resting place; "the Bedouin shepherd became the civilized and agricultural settler." — Unwilling to mix with an idolatrous people, he did not enter the city, but he fixed his tents outside the gates, and bought the piece of the field of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred shekels. This spot was hallowed by an altar raised to the Lord and called by Jacob *El-elohe-Jisrael* (The Omnipotent, God of Israel).

22. JACOB IN SHECHEM, BETHEL, AND HEBRON.

[Genes. XXXIV. XXXV.]

Jacob sojourned at Shechem about six or eight years, when a sin occasioned by his daughter Dinah, and accompanied by violent and wrathful actions on the part of her brothers Simeon and Levi, put an end to the peace and happiness which the family had enjoyed in that abode. The voice of the Lord commanded Jacob to leave his newly bought field, and to depart again until he should come to Bethel. There, where he had seen the angels of God descending from heaven, he was to stay and to build an altar to the Lord. But he felt that he ought not to approach the holy spot where he had made his solemn vow, before all his followers had given up the idolatrous images and emblems which still tainted their worship. Therefore, he assembled his household and said, "Remove the strange gods that are among you, and clean yourselves, and change your garments." With prompt alacrity his command was obeyed; and he buried all the objects of superstition under an oak near Shechem: among them were the earrings worn by men and women not merely as ornaments but as amulets or charms against evil, and generally covered with allegorical figures or mysterious words; they belonged indeed to the "enchantments" strictly forbidden in a later age.

Then the tents were slung once more upon the poles, the herdsmen drove their herds and flocks before them, and the wealthy patriarch with his wives and children departed from the vale of Shechem. They travelled in safety through the land, for they were under the Divine protection, and the nations durst not harm them. Jacob halted at Bethel, where he had once slept as a poor and homeless wanderer. Now he had returned a rich emir, the father of many children, blessed indeed by God.

He built another altar calling the place *El-beth-El* or God of the house of God, because there the Lord and His angels had been revealed to him before. At Bethel, Deborah had died, the nurse of Rebekah, who had accompanied her mistress from Mesopotamia. She had been buried under the spreading branches of an oak, which was called the Oak of Weeping in commemoration of the event. Probably Jacob's caravan passed by the oak on their journey southward, and doubtless some herdsmen or other wanderers may have told them of the faithful and well-beloved servant resting beneath its shade.

After the consecration of the altar at Bethel, the Lord appeared again to Jacob, and said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a multitude of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come forth of thy loins; and the land which I gave to Abraham and to Isaac, to thee I shall give it, and to thy seed after thee I shall give the land."

On the spot where the Lord had appeared to him, Jacob erected a pillar of stone, and he offered a libation upon it, anointed it with oil, and thus hallowed it for ever.

He departed from Bethel, and journeyed on southward, hoping soon to arrive at Hebron, the abode of his youth. But Rachel was not to see that old home consecrated by the faith of Abraham and the piety of Isaac. Bethlehem, where the caravan halted, standing high on the narrow ridge of long grey hills, was the birthplace of Benjamin and the grave of Rachel. The dying mother called the new-born child *Benoni* (son of my grief); but Jacob, bent down indeed by the loss of his beloved wife, yet glorying in his twelfth son, gave him the name *Benjamin* (son of happiness). Rachel was buried on the heights of Bethlehem, where the purple vine grows in most luxuriant beauty. The mourning Jacob

raised a pillar over her sepulchre. The fond love with which he had ever cherished her was perpetuated in his affection for the two sons she had left him; they were to him the dearest of his children.

And now at last he arrived at Hebron, and stood once again in the presence of the aged Isaac. The Bible gives us no detail of this meeting, and Rebekah is not mentioned again. We are only told that Isaac died when he was a hundred and eighty years old, and that he was buried by his two sons Esau and Jacob.

23. THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH.

[Genes. XXXVII. XXXIX–XLV.]

In the domestic history of Jacob, which the sacred narrative relates with touching simplicity, the life and career of Joseph, the patriarch's eleventh son, occupy the most prominent place.

When Joseph was a youth seventeen years old, he was a shepherd and tended his father's flocks together with his brothers, especially the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah. He was the darling of Jacob's heart, who loved him better than all his other children, and with a weakness almost surprising in one so remarkable for prudence, he openly showed his preference. He showed it, among other things, by giving to his favourite son a long and costly robe. In eastern countries, the brilliant colours and ample folds of the garment are a great distinction, and denote that their possessor is conspicuous either by rank, wealth, or talent. This costly many-coloured robe became an eyesore to his brothers; they looked upon him with jealousy and envy; and feeling wronged by their father, they hated their innocent brother. But that hatred became fierce indeed, when Joseph related them his dreams. For in the East, dreams were, as

they are still, regarded as the mysterious voice announcing the future, expressive either of warning or of hope; and their meaning was most anxiously searched. Dreams play a great part in the sacred history; in the story of Joseph's life, they come invariably as the turning point of his fortunes, whether for evil or for good. His first dream he related thus to his brothers: "Behold we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold my sheaf rose, and indeed stood upright; and behold your sheaves stood round about, and prostrated themselves before my sheaf." Joseph spoke in the innocence of his heart, though probably thinking that the dream might in time be accomplished. His brothers, full of gnawing envy and hatred, exclaimed, "Wilt thou indeed reign over us? wilt thou indeed have dominion over us?" Again Joseph dreamt, and again he related his dream to his brothers. This time it was still more ambitious in its bearing: "Behold the sun and the moon and eleven stars prostrated themselves before me." This dream Joseph repeated to his father as well as to his brothers. Jacob heard it with something like indignation mixed with sorrow: "What is this dream which thou hast dreamt?" exclaimed the patriarch; "shall I and thy mother and thy brothers indeed come to prostrate ourselves before thee to the ground?" Yet the words sank deep into his mind; he, the father, remembered them, but the brothers envied Joseph more and more.

The elder sons of Jacob drove their flocks northward from Hebron until they came to Shechem. They had probably spent some time in the beautiful valley, when Jacob, anxious to hear of them and their flocks, said to Joseph: "Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brothers and well with their flocks, and bring me word again." So Joseph went forth obediently, unconscious or unmindful of the hatred of his brothers. Whilst wandering about in

the execution of his errand, he was met by a stranger, who directed him to Dothan, situated on the great caravan track from Gilead to Egypt, in the narrow mountain paths that lead from Judèa to the middle and northern parts of Palestine, and about twelve miles north of Samaria. It was probably less frequented than the vale of Shechem, but it was from time to time enlivened by the caravans passing southward to Egypt, or northward to the districts of Lebanon and of Syria. The brothers saw Joseph approaching from afar, and resolved that in this lonely mountain path he should end his life. "Behold," said one to another, "the dreamer comes: come now, therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into one of the pits, and we will say, Some evil beast has devoured him; and we shall see what becomes of his dreams." Reuben, upon whom, as the eldest brother, the responsibility chiefly fell, and who was, moreover, animated by better and gentler feelings, recoiled from the sin which his brothers were about to commit, and he determined to save the unfortunate youth. Knowing well how unscrupulous his brothers were, he felt that it was useless to entreat for mercy; but he endeavoured to gain his object by an artifice. So he said, "Shed no blood; cast him into this pit which is in the desert, but lay no hand upon him." Thus he hoped to save Joseph's life, and then to bring him back to his father. The brothers approved of Reuben's proposal, and seizing Joseph as soon as he approached, they stripped him of his long and costly robe, of the robe which had been the first cause of their envy, and cast him into an empty pit. As if glorying over this deed, they prepared a meal and sat down to eat. Reuben alone does not seem to have been present at the feast; he had with drawn to some distance, probably watching for an opportunity when he might carry out his intention.

Whilst still at their repast, the brothers suddenly

beheld winding along the narrow mountain pass a caravan of Ishmaelites, who were journeying into Egypt. Their camels were laden with the spices for which Arabia is famous, and which were prized as luxuries by the Egyptians. Not only were these spices eaten as delicacies, and used as exquisite scents by the nobles, but they were also in great request for embalming the dead, as the fragrant mummies were often for generations kept in the houses of the relatives and arranged along the walls, before they were finally entombed. The quantity of condiments required by the Egyptians was therefore immense, and numerous were the caravans which from very early times carried them southward from Gilead. The Ishmaelites who passed Jacob's sons, imported three sorts of spices — tragacanth, balsam, and ladanum. The first can only be conjectured to mean the gummi tragacanthae, which is found in Arabia, Gilead, and Palestine; balsam and ladanum are well-known productions common to Arabia, Palestine, and Spain.

As soon as Judah saw the traders approaching, an expedient for saving Joseph struck him, and he said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our flesh." His brothers listened to him and consented. So Joseph was drawn out of the pit and taken to the Ishmaelites, who offered twenty shekels of silver for the comely youth. Death and starvation had been before him, and now his lot was slavery, banishment into an idolatrous country, and perpetual separation from the father who idolized him. Yet he had not dreamt in vain. Surely the remembrance of his dreams must have comforted him in that dark hour. The Ishmaelites departed with the young Hebrew. In the mean time Reuben, when he supposed that his brothers had left the neighbourhood, returned to the pit

to deliver Joseph. But he did not find him, and in an agony of despair he rent his garments, and hastened back to his brothers. "The child is not there," he cried, "and I, whither shall I go!" Then the wicked and deceitful brothers killed a kid, and dipped Joseph's robe into the blood. With a malice which appears too fearful to dwell upon, they brought the robe to their aged father and said: "This have we found, recognise now, whether it be thy son's robe or not." Jacob did recognise it, and exclaimed in despair, "It is my son's robe, an evil beast has devoured him: surely Joseph is torn in pieces." — He mourned long and in bitter grief and anguish, with sack-cloth upon his loins, and his clothes rent. In vain did his sons and daughters try to console him; he refused to be comforted and said, "Indeed I shall go down into the grave to my son mourning."

Meanwhile the camels of the Ishmaelites were pursuing their way onward from Dothan to Shechem, and then southward to Jerusalem. Joseph passed as a slave through the land which was once to be the glory of his descendants. Over the bleak mountains of Judea the caravan swept, in a south-westerly direction to Gaza, and from there to the rich and fertile valley of the Nile. Then it proceeded through the narrow pass of Dshebel-el Tih, until at last it arrived at the great Egyptian town On, or Heliopolis, "the city of light," which was consecrated to the Sun, and was at that time probably the residence of the Egyptian kings or Pharaohs, that is "the children of the Sun." The Egyptians, as they were one of the most learned, so they were also among the most idolatrous and superstitious nations of the ancient world. Not only did they consider the sun as the symbol of the deity or as the deity itself, but in the very centre of the sacred temple at Memphis, shrouded from all eyes save those of the priests, reposed on its scarlet bed the sacred bullock Mnevis, the rival of Apis; perched in its

golden cage, sat the sacred hawk, the living representation of the deity; and twice a day incense was offered before the beasts, and once a month a solemn sacrifice.

But besides being the seat of Egyptian idolatry, On was also the home of Egyptian scholarship; there were gathered the astronomers and astrologers, the great mathematicians, the men of science, far-famed in the ancient world. Joseph was to be surrounded by men whose descendants were the teachers of Pythagoras and Thales, of Solon and Plato. The erudition of the Egyptians was to improve the pure but uncultivated mind of the young stranger, whilst their superstition and luxury should be to him a perpetual warning. Joseph must have felt awe-struck and dazzled when the magnificent and colossal temple of On, with its immense obelisks and majestic sphinxes, rose suddenly before him. The shepherd boy who had breathed all his life the fresh air of Shechem and Hebron, was taken from his simple tent and his flocks, to be transplanted into the very centre of wealth and civilization. He was sold by the Ishmaelites to Potiphar (meaning "servant of the Sun") who was the chief officer of Pharaoh's guard: thus he was at once brought into contact with the highest Egyptian rank and splendour. But even among all these wise and learned men, Joseph was considered eminently gifted; the Lord was with him and caused him to be loved and respected by his master. Everything that he undertook succeeded, and he brought prosperity and happiness to Potiphar, who soon made him overseer of his entire household. He was, moreover, "beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance." Now Potiphar's wife, a wicked woman, grew enamoured of the comely young Hebrew, and Joseph, indignant at her conduct, escaped at last from the house of his master and benefactor, in his hasty flight leaving his cloak behind him. Potiphar, returning to his house, was

met by his infuriated wife, who holding the garment in her hand greeted him with a tale of calumny against his favourite Joseph. Potiphar believed the words of his worthless wife, and Joseph was cast into a prison attached to the house. In this place were detained persons who had committed some treasonable offence against the king or against any of the great officers of his household. The governor of the prison was a good and benevolent man, and he soon perceived Joseph's rare virtues, his honesty and zeal, his truthfulness and industry, his ability and intelligence. It was as if the Divine light shone through his countenance, and as if the voice of God spoke from his lips. Thus in the dreary dungeon, abandoned by all who belonged to his own tribe and his own faith, he was not only cheered by the consciousness of his innocence, but upheld by the esteem and confidence of the governor, "who committed to his hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he did it: the keeper of the prison did not look to anything that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper."

Among the prisoners were two of the officers of the king's household, his chief butler and his chief baker. They were guarded and served by Joseph during all the time that they remained in custody. One night both of them dreamt dreams which seemed to them full of significance. Their minds, brooding over their misfortunes, saw in the dreams nothing but mysterious forebodings of evil; and when Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw their sadness. He at once asked them the cause of it; and when they replied, "We have dreamt a dream, and there is no one to interpret it;" Joseph exclaimed, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams, I pray you." And the chief butler, trusting in Joseph's wisdom and upright-

ness, complied with the request and said: "In my dreams, behold a vine was before me; and on the vine were three branches, and it was as if it budded, and its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters matured ripe grapes. And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand." Joseph at once gave the interpretation as follows: "The three branches are three days; within three days more Pharaoh will lift up thy head and restore thee to thy place, and thou wilt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hands in the former manner when thou wast his butler." And naturally watching every opportunity for his own rescue from the sad captivity, he added: "Only remember me when it will be well with thee, and do kindness, I pray thee, to me, and make mention of me to Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews; and here again have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon." The chief baker, encouraged by the favourable interpretation Joseph had given to his colleague's dream, proceeded to relate his own: "I also was in my dream, and behold, I had three baskets of white bread on my head. And in the uppermost basket there was all kind of food for Pharaoh, the work of the baker; and the birds ate them out of my basket upon my head." — Joseph replied fearlessly: "This is its interpretation: The three baskets are three days; within three days more Pharaoh will lift up thy head from thee, and will hang thee upon a tree; and the birds will eat thy flesh from thee." Joseph's predictions were literally fulfilled; for "on the third day which was Pharaoh's birth-day, he made a feast to all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and the head of the chief baker among his servants. And he restored the chief butler to his butlership, and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand; but he hanged the chief

baker as Joseph had interpreted to them." — Restored to his high station, the chief butler forgot his wise fellow-prisoner. But it was not ordained that Joseph's life should pass wearily on in the Egyptian dungeon. God watched over him, and the time was now at hand when he should step from the prison to the distinction he deserved. Two years had passed away, and king Pharaoh himself dreamt a dream which filled him with wonder and awe. "He was standing by the river Nile. And behold there came up out of the river seven cows, fine in appearance and fat in flesh; and they fed in the reed-grass. And behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, bad in appearance and lean in flesh; and they stood by the other cows upon the bank of the river. And the cows bad in appearance and lean in flesh, consumed the seven cows fine in appearance and fat. And Pharaoh awoke. And he slept and dreamt a second time: and behold, seven ears of corn came up on one stalk, strong and good. And behold, seven ears thin and blasted by the east-wind sprang up after them. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven strong and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold it was a dream."

Pharaoh's spirit was troubled, for although he did not know the interpretation of the dreams, he felt that they had a deep and important meaning. He may have vaguely imagined that they had some reference to the produce of the land. For the Nile, the one great river of Egypt, is the almost exclusive source of fertility for the whole land. It was, therefore, an object of veneration and worship; it was the holy, the blessed, the beneficent river. Again, the cow was the symbol of Isis, the goddess of the earth and of fruitfulness. Then the very fact of a second dream following immediately upon the first, and resembling it so closely in form, was considered a sure proof of its reality

and speedy fulfilment. Yet Pharaoh could arrive at no distinct conclusion. His mind was perplexed. He sent to all the sooth-sayers and wise men of On. He told them his dreams, but not one of them could offer an interpretation. The learned Egyptians were at fault, men who were regarded as superior in knowledge to all others, and as inspired by their gods. The chief butler, seeing the king's trouble, now suddenly bethought himself of the young Hebrew, and he said to Pharaoh: "I remember my sins this day: Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and gave me into custody in the house of the chief of the guard, both me and the chief baker. And we dreamt a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamt each according to the interpretation of his dream. And there was with us a Hebrew youth, a servant to the chief of the guard; and we told him and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man he interpreted according to his dream. And it happened as he interpreted to us, so it was; I was restored to my office, and he was hanged." Perhaps this youth might speak, and speak truly, when the wise and the learned of Egypt were dumb.

Pharaoh at once sent for Joseph; he was instantly brought out of the dungeon, and appeared before the king in the garb of the Egyptians, with the beard, the great pride of the Hebrews, shaven from his chin. And Pharaoh said to Joseph: "I have dreamt a dream, and there is none who can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee that thou understandest a dream to interpret it." He then related his dreams, upon which Joseph clearly and firmly observed: "The dream of Pharaoh is one: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. And the seven thin and bad cows that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted by the east-wind will be seven years of famine.

This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh: what God is about to do, He has shown to Pharaoh. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt; and there will arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will consume the land; and the plenty will not be known in the land on account of that famine afterwards; for it will be very heavy. And because the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice, indeed the thing is established by God, and God will hasten to bring it to pass." But Joseph was not satisfied with merely stating impending events and calamities, he at once indicated the means to obviate or to mitigate them, and he continued: "Now therefore let Pharaoh look out for a man intelligent and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part in the land of Egypt in the seven years of plenty. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, for food in the cities, and keep it. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which will be in the land of Egypt, that the land do not perish through the famine."

The king felt that the spirit of God rested upon the Hebrew youth, and idolator as he was, he could not help feeling reverence for that God. Delighted with the counsel of Joseph, he turned to his no less astonished servants, and urged them frankly to confess that there was not one amongst them equal to the captive stranger in intelligence and wisdom. The parentage, the slavery, and the cause of Joseph's imprisonment were immaterial to the high-minded king; he saw and fully appreciated his rare and remarkable abilities; and exercising his sovereign power, he raised him in a moment to the highest position in the state. "And

Pharaoh said to Joseph, Since God has taught thee all this, there is none intelligent and wise like thyself; thou shalt be over my house, and all my people shall obey thy command; only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, Behold I have set thee over all the land of Egypt."

Can we not see in all this true glimpses of Egyptian life, as we look back through the dim shadow of retreating ages? What is engraved for ever in the pages of the Bible, lives once again in the pictured records of Egypt now carefully examined and reproduced. Joseph clad in fine linen, with the heavy gold chain, the proud ornament of the noble Egyptian, round his neck, with the king's own ring upon his hand, was to be presented to the people as their ruler and their governor, second only to Pharaoh himself. The procession went forth with its horsemen and chariots, and lines of priests and men of science from the royal residence, traversing the sacred city of the Sun. The new governor of Egypt drove in the second state-carriage, whilst the people shouted round about him *Abrech* (Ruler), and Pharaoh, in a burst of delight and gratitude, addressed Joseph before his excited and wondering subjects with the words, "I am Pharaoh, but without thee no man shall lift his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt." Then the king bestowed upon him the glorious Egyptian name of *Zaphenath-paneah* (Rescuer of the World). And in order to strengthen and enhance Joseph's affection for the country of his adoption, the king gave him as a wife an Egyptian maiden, Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, the priest of the Sun. Nothing could have impressed the high station, honour, and eminent wisdom of the young Hebrew governor upon the minds of the Egyptians more powerfully than this marriage. The priests of the Sun were almost sacred in the eyes of the people, and the daughters of High-priests were con-

sidered fitting brides for none but the greatest and most distinguished nobles in the kingdom.

Joseph was thirty years old when he was elevated to his august dignity, to which he at once devoted his whole attention and energy. He travelled through the length and breadth of the land, in order to inform himself personally of its wants and resources. As he had foretold, the wonderful abundance of the harvests during the next seven years was unparalleled. So he caused a vast amount of provisions to be laid by for the years of famine. Every city had its granaries stocked with boundless stores of corn. The Egyptians who at first kept accounts of their marvellous supplies, were soon forced to desist, for the corn was indeed "numberless like the sand of the sea." — During these seven years of rejoicing, two sons were born to Joseph. His thoughts naturally reverted to his own youth, to his father's tent at Hebron. He could not discard from his mind those early scenes, in spite of his Egyptian wife and his royal friends. Probably his heart had often yearned towards Jacob, towards the land of Palestine. When, therefore, a son was born to him, he looked upon him as a compensation for the troubles he had suffered in the past, and exclaimed: "God has made me forget all my toils and all my father's house;" and he called him Manasseh. When a second child gladdened his home, he said: "I will call him Ephraim, for God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my afflictions."

When the seven years of plenty had elapsed, a famine of most fearful and unexampled rigour began. It was not confined to Egypt alone, but extended to all the surrounding countries. The hungering people raised a cry of despair; and as usual in such distress, they appealed to the king. Pharaoh bid them go to Joseph and submit to his directions. Then the large granaries disclosed their treasures

of corn, and all the Egyptians came and bought from Joseph. The intelligence that corn was piled up in Egypt, soon spread into other countries, and from all sides men flocked to the kingdom of Pharaoh, in order to purchase the staff of life.

Twenty-two years had passed since Joseph had left the tent of Jacob; but the old patriarch still lived; and his eleven sons with their wives and children, all herdsmen like their father, dwelt round about him. The famine spread to Palestine also; and Jacob, aroused by the example of the people from neighbouring countries, called his sons to him, and urged them also to go to Egypt to buy corn "so that they might live and not die." So ten of the brothers set out upon their journey; for Jacob, now clinging with even greater attachment to his youngest child Benjamin, the only one left of his fondly beloved Rachel, would not consent to expose him to the dangers of the road, "lest a misfortune might befall him."

Joseph, distributing corn to the nations, saw the men approach from the distance. They came to the great governor of the land, and prostrated themselves before him. How should they suspect that that proud and mighty Egyptian in his magnificent robes, surrounded by the state and pomp of a royal prince, could be the brother they had sold as a slave? But Joseph knew at a glance that these Hebrew herdsmen, with the freshness of the valley on their faces, were no other than his own brothers. Joseph was not impulsive, still less revengeful; but a strong sense of justice pervaded his mind. He felt that the brothers deserved a signal punishment for the inhuman cruelty they had committed against him. He felt, moreover, that that punishment was now entrusted to his own hands; and he was resolved to perform the painful and unwelcome office with manly firmness. "He made himself strange to his brothers,

and spoke roughly to them; and he said to them, From whence do you come? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy corn for food." Joseph of course was well aware of the truth of this reply; but the Egyptians were proverbially suspicious, especially to strangers, and availing himself of this well-known trait of his adopted people, he retorted with assumed anger, "You are spies; to see the nakedness of the land you are come. And they said to him, No my lord, but to buy corn for food are thy servants come; we are all one man's sons; we are true men; thy servants are no spies. And he said to them, No, but to see the nakedness of the land you are come. And they said, Thy servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is no more. And Joseph said to them, That is what I spoke to you saying, You are spies;" and swearing in true Egyptian fashion, he added: "By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go home, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you, or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies." And the threat, so entirely in harmony with the arbitrary despotism of the Oriental ruler, was at once carried into effect; and the unfortunate brothers were thrown into prison. On the third day, he liberated them with apparently equal capriciousness, and said to them, "This do and live; for I fear God: if you are true men, let one of your brothers be imprisoned in the house of your custody; and you go, carry corn for the famine of your houses; but bring your youngest brother to me. Then will your words be verified, and you shall not die."

The brothers looked awe-struck at this strange Egyp-

tian, so haughty, nay cruel, yet professing to be a God-fearing man. Their consciences began to trouble them, they were in fear and torture, and they spoke one to another in their native Hebrew tongue: "We are verily guilty concerning our brother; for we saw the anguish of his soul when he implored us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Did I not say to you, Do not sin against the child, and you would not hear? Therefore, behold his blood is required." Joseph understood them well, and the touching words went straight to his heart; he left the brothers and wept, but then returned, determined to carry out his difficult mission. So he took from them Simeon, and ordered him to be bound before their eyes. Partly to try and partly to harass them, he commanded that the money should be secretly returned in the sack of each. When they discovered this on their homeward journey at a resting place, they were seized with fear, and were unable to explain the matter. They arrived in their father's home careworn and unhappy: Simeon was a captive in Egypt; their words had been disbelieved by the governor; their very actions seemed to belie their honesty; and worse than all, they had promised to return with the darling of Jacob's heart, Benjamin; for thus alone could Simeon be released and their good faith proved. They told their sad tale to the unfortunate patriarch, who, seeing the bundle of money in each man's sack, said in agony, "You have bereaved me of my children; Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you will take Benjamin away: all this comes upon me. And Reuben said to his father, Thou mayest kill my two sons if I do not bring him to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will restore him to thee. And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and

he alone is left to me; if an accident befall him on the way in which you go, then you will bring down my grey hair with sorrow into the grave."

And yet the dire scourge of the famine compelled the brothers soon to undertake another journey to Egypt. The story of that journey and of the remarkable incidents connected with it, must be related in the very words of the Bible: no others can do justice to the pathos of the events, as no others can equal them in impressive simplicity.

"And the famine was heavy in the land. And when they had entirely eaten up the purchase of corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said to them, Go again, buy corn for us for a little food. And Judah said to him, The man solemnly protested to us, saying, You shall not see my face, except your brother be with you: if thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy for thee corn for food; but if thou wilt not send him, we shall not go down; for the man said to us, You shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. And Israel said, Wherefore have you done evil to me, to tell the man, whether you had yet a brother? And they said, The man asked us closely about ourselves and about our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have you another brother? and we told him in accordance with these words; could we indeed know that he would say, Bring your brother down? And Judah said to Israel his father, Send the youth with me, and we will rise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and our little ones. I will be surety for him; of my hand thou mayest demand him; if I do not bring him to thee, and place him before thee, then I will have sinned against thee for ever: for if we had not lingered, surely we had now returned twice. And their father Israel said to them, If it is so indeed, do this; take of the choicest fruits of the land in your utensils, and carry

down to the man a present, a little balsam and a little honey, tragacanth and ladanum, pistacchio-nuts and almonds. And take other money in your hand; and the money that was returned in the mouth of your bags, take it back in your hand; perhaps it was a mistake. Take also your brother, and rise, go again to the man. And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send with you your other brother, and Benjamin: and I, as I am bereaved, I am bereaved. And the men took their present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and they rose, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph. And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, Bring these men into the house, and kill, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon. And the man did as Joseph had ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph's house; and the men were afraid, and they said, On account of the money that was returned in our bags at the first time we are brought in, that he may throw himself upon us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses. And they approached the steward of Joseph's house, and they spoke with him at the door of the house, and said, Pray, sir, we came down the first time to buy corn for food; and it happened, when we came to the halting-place, that we opened our bags, and, behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his bag, our money in its full weight; and we have brought it back in our hand; and other money have we brought down in our hand to buy corn for food; we do not know who put our money in our bags. And he said, Peace be to you, fear not; your God and the God of your father has given you the treasure in your bags; I have received your money. And he brought Simeon out to them. And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave

provender to their asses. And they made ready the present before Joseph came at noon; for they heard that they should there eat a meal. And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and prostrated themselves before him to the ground. And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive? And they said, Thy servant our father, is well, he is still alive. And they bowed and prostrated themselves. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? And he said, God be gracious to thee my son. And Joseph hastened, for his love was warmed for his brother; and he sought where to weep, and he entered into his chamber and wept there. And he washed his face, and went out, and restrained himself, and said, Set on the meal. And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians who were eating with him, by themselves: for the Egyptians cannot eat a meal with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his primogeniture, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another. And he sent portions to them from himself, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of the portions of all the rest. And they drank and were merry with him. And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's bags with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his bag's mouth. And put my cup, the silver cup, into the mouth of the bag of the youngest, and the money of his purchase of corn. And he did in accordance with the word that Joseph had spoken. When morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses. When they had left

the city, and had not yet gone far, Joseph said to his steward, Rise, pursue after the men, and when thou overtakest them, say to them, Wherefore have you returned evil for good? Is not this it of which my lord drinks, and whereby he surely divines? You have done evil in what you did. And he overtook them, and spoke to them those words. And they said to him, Wherefore does my lord say these words? God forbid that thy servants should do a thing like that: behold, the money which we found in the mouths of our bags, we returned to thee out of the land of Canaan; how then should we steal out of the house of thy lord silver or gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, let him die, and we also will be bondmen to thy lord. And he said, Is it now indeed right according to your words? he with whom it is found shall be my servant; but you shall be blameless. And they hastened, and took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. And he searched and began with the eldest, and finished with the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's bag. And they rent their clothes, and loaded every man his ass, and returned to the city. And Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house; and he was still there: and they fell before him on the ground. And Joseph said to them, What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I can certainly divine? And Judah said, What shall we say to my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we justify ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold we are my lord's servants, both we and he in whose hand the cup has been found. And he said, God forbid that I should do so; the man in whose hand the cup has been found, he shall be my servant; but you go up in peace to your father.

And Judah stepped near to him, and said: O my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears,

and let not thy anger burn against thy servant: for thou art as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, Have you a father or a brother? And we said to my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a young one; and his brother is dead; and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him. And thou saidst to thy servants, Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes upon him. And we said to my lord, The youth cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die. And thou saidst to thy servants, Unless your youngest brother come down with you, you shall see my face no more. And when we came up to thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little corn for food. And we said, We cannot go down; if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the man's face, if our youngest brother be not with us. And thy servant my father said to us, You know that my wife bore me two sons; and the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since; and if you take this one also from me, and an accident befall him, you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow into the grave. Now therefore, when I come to thy servant my father, and the youth be not with us, since his soul is bound up in the youth's soul; it will happen, when he sees that the youth is not with us, that he will die; and thy servants will bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow into the grave. For thy servant became surety for the youth to my father, saying, If I do not bring him to thee, then I will have sinned to my father for ever. Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant remain instead of the youth as a bondman with my lord; and let the youth go up with his brothers. For how shall I go up to my father,

and the youth is not with me? lest perhaps I see the evil that will befall my father.

Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, Let every man go out from me. And there stood no man with him, when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it. And Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph; does my father yet live? And his brothers could not answer him; for they were confounded before him. And Joseph said to his brothers, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that you sold me hither; for God sent me before you for the preservation of life. For these two years has the famine been in the land; and there are yet five years, in which there will neither be ploughing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither but God: and He has made me governor to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Hasten, and go up to my father, and say to him, Thus says thy son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, tarry not; and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast; and there will I nourish thee; for there are yet five years of famine, lest thou and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. And you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hasten, and bring down my father hither.

And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers, and wept upon them: and after that his brothers spoke to him.

The report was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brothers are come; and it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, Say to thy brothers, This do, load your animals, and go, come to the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come to me; and I will give you the best part of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do: take you carriages out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. And do not regard your utensils; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours. And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them carriages, according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver, and five changes of raiment. And to his father he sent after this manner: ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she-asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father on the way. — And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan to Jacob their father. And they told him, Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart remained cold, for he did not believe them. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them; and when he saw the carriages which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. And Israel said, It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

It will be observed that Joseph throughout sustained his assumed character of an Egyptian noble, and remained true

to it to the minutest detail — in the meal eaten apart from his brothers and from his inferiors, in the constant presence of the interpreter, his pretence of miraculous insight, his prophecy from the sacred goblet, and his repeated oaths by the life of Pharaoh; he, in fact, succeeded completely in perplexing and amazing his brothers by what appeared to them supernatural knowledge and wisdom.

24. SETTLEMENT OF JACOB'S FAMILY IN EGYPT.

[Genes. XLVI—XLVII. 12.]

Once more was Jacob to journey forth from the old familiar Hebron, his Canaanite home, but this time it was not to escape from an offended brother, but to meet a beloved and affectionate son in power. His heart may indeed have been troubled as he left the spot where the Lord had bid him stay. But he was cheered and comforted by the assurance of God's continued protection; he offered up sacrifices at Beer-sheba, his first resting-place and the future boundary of the promised land. In the visions of the night the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am the Omnipotent, the God of thy father; fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will also surely bring thee up again, and Joseph shall put his hands upon thy eyes." So he departed from Beer-sheba, encouraged and strengthened, and journeyed on the usual south-western road towards Egypt, a caravan of 67 souls, so that, including Joseph and his two sons, the Hebrew settlement in Egypt consisted of 70 souls, in addition to the wives of Jacob's sons and the servants. When they entered the territory of the land which was to be their new home, Jacob "sent Judah before him to Joseph, to direct him to Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. And Joseph made

ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and he appeared before him, and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a long time. And Israel said to Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive."

Who would not rejoice with Jacob, the man of sorrows and trials, at last brought to a haven of rest, in an unknown country it is true, but still as the beloved father and chief of a numerous family, the ancestor of a Godfearing race!

Joseph wished his brothers to have ample pasturage in the land of Goshen, one of the most fertile parts of Egypt. With his usual wisdom, he saw that his family must not mix with the idolatrous Egyptians, in order that their faith and worship might remain as pure as they had been in Canaan. To attain this end, he effected a complete separation between his brothers and the people of Egypt. Jacob's sons were, like all Bedouins, herdsmen; but the agricultural and highly civilized Egyptians held nomadic shepherds in unreasonable scorn; thus by urging before Pharaoh his brothers' pastoral pursuits, Joseph hoped to secure for them the indisturbed, if not the exclusive, possession of a most fertile district. He therefore presented five of his brothers to the king. "And Pharaoh said to his brothers, What is your occupation? And they said to Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and our fathers. They said moreover to Pharaoh, To sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is heavy in the land of Canaan: now, therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen." Then Pharaoh, true to his open-handed generosity, said to Joseph: "Thy father and thy brothers are come to thee: the land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and thy brothers dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell; and if thou knowest

any men of ability among them, make them overseers over my cattle." — Then Joseph brought his father to the king, who, moved by the sight of that aged chieftain who had come to spend his last days in a strange land, asked with surprise and interest, "How many are the years of thy life? And Jacob said to Pharaoh, The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the years of my life been, and have not attained to the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh. And Joseph made his father and his brothers dwell, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph supported his father, and his brothers, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families."

25. JOSEPH ACQUIRES FOR THE KING THE WHOLE SOIL OF EGYPT.

[Genes. XLVII. 15—26.]

We would fain end the story of Joseph without alluding to his last acts which, painful in themselves, stand in harsh contrast to the bonds of kindness that seem hitherto to have united the ruler and the ruled. But we must always remember that the Bible does not demand of us a blind hero-worship: the persons introduced are rather set before us as pictures of human nature, in many cases noble, pure, and faithful, but still not free from weakness nor guarded against error and sin. Not even the most revered characters are without shadows, from which often spring sorrow and trials followed by bitter penitence and at last by atonement. If the instruments of God's will were supernaturally perfect beings, our interest and sympathy for

them would be less direct and less profound, and the Bible would in some measure cease to be the Book best fitted to guide the erring wanderer struggling towards virtue and truth.

The famine in the land of Egypt was fearful in the extreme; it was probably even more distressing than the people had anticipated. Now the Egyptians had bought corn from Joseph until all their money was spent: but the visitation of the seven unfortunate years was far from concluded. The people came to the granaries clamouring for bread. Their agony was terrible; but Joseph, feeling only for Pharaoh, and acting in his sole interest, would give to the people no corn except in exchange for their cattle. Their magnificent horses and fleet asses, their herds and flocks thus became royal property. But at the end of a year, they had exhausted this resource also; and with the grim prospect of starvation staring in their face, they came again to Joseph with their wails. This time their cry was more piteous still; they said: "We will not hide it from my lord; but our money is spent; our herds of cattle also have passed into the hands of my lord; there is nothing left before my lord, except our bodies and our lands: wherefore shall we die before thy eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be subjected to Pharaoh; and give us seed that we may live, and not die, and that the land do not lie waste. And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's."

It is sad indeed to dwell upon this scene of slavery and spoliation—the act of the pious, Godfearing Joseph, of the generous and high-minded king. Not only did the whole land pass into Pharaoh's possession, but the people, in order to be weaned from the soil which they and their ancestors

had so long occupied and cherished, were heartlessly transplanted from one boundary of Egypt to the other. The priests alone, forming a free caste, remained in possession of their land. Seed was then given by Joseph to the husbandmen under the exacting condition that the fifth part of the harvests was to be delivered up to Pharaoh. And under the influence of dire want, the people had become so degraded that they exclaimed rejoicingly, "Thou hast saved our lives, let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be servants to Pharaoh!"

Jacob spent seventeen years in Egypt peacefully and happily; then, having attained the age of a hundred and forty-seven years, he felt that his end was approaching. He sent for his son Joseph, and made him promise by a solemn oath, not to bury him in Egypt, but to take his body to Canaan and to inter it by the side of his ancestors in the cave of Machpelah. Joseph gave the pledge without hesitation.

26. MANASSEH AND EPHRAIM.

[Genes. XLVIII.]

Manasseh and Ephraim were the two eldest sons of Joseph, born before the settlement of his father and brothers in Egypt. Jacob loved them, and desired that their descendants should have equal inheritance in the promised land with those of his own children.

He communicated this wish to Joseph, and as he spoke to the son of his beloved Rachel, his thoughts reverted for a moment to her, and he saw again that distant mountain pass of Bethlehem, where Rachel lay buried beneath the purple vine. He paused in his prophecies of the distant future to dwell upon events of the past: "As for me, I saw Rachel die in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was still a distance of land to come to Ephrath, and I bu-

ried her there on the way of Ephrath, that is Bethlehem." Then turning towards Joseph, he saw through the waning light of his eyes the two youths who were with him, and he said, "Who are these? And Joseph said to his father, They are my sons, whom God has given me here. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, to me, and I will bless them. But the eyes of Israel were dim from old age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near to him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, I had not hoped to see thy face; and, behold, God has allowed me to see thy seed also. And Joseph brought them forth from his knees, and he prostrated himself before his face to the ground. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand towards Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand towards Israel's right hand, and brought them near to him. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, laying on his hands deliberately; for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who was my shepherd from my birth to this day, the angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless the youths; and let in them my name be called, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them increase into a vast multitude in the midst of the land. And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, Not so, my father; for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become

a numerous people. And he blessed them on that day, saying, By thee shall Israel bless, saying, May God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh: and he put Ephraim before Manasseh. And Israel said to Joseph, Behold, I die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. And I give to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I take out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow."

Thus spoke Israel in true prophetic tones; and as had been the case several times before, to the younger brother was promised the greater inheritance. Joseph himself, who had been the most illustrious and the most honoured child of his house during his lifetime, was not to have the glory of transmitting his name to a tribe.

27. JACOB'S LAST ADDRESS TO HIS CHILDREN.

[Genes. XLIX. 1—28.]

And now, as the long life of the patriarch Jacob was drawing to its close, his whole mind seemed to expand with visions of the future. His sons, some of them old, grey-headed men, left their flocks, and their herds, and their fields, and gathered reverentially round his death-bed. He then addressed them with these prophetic words, which comprise a large epoch of Hebrew history:

"Assemble that I may tell you what will befall you in later days. Gather yourselves and listen, ye sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel your father.

REUBEN, thou art my firstborn,
My strength and the firstling of my vigour,
The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power:
Unstable as water,
Thou shalt not excel;

For thou didst ascend thy father's bed;
Then didst thou defile it: —
My couch he has ascended.

SIMEON and LEVI are brethren,
An instrument of violence is their burning rage.
Into their council my soul shall not come,
In their assembly my glory shall not join:
For in their anger they slew men,
And in their self-will they hamstrung oxen.
Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce,
And their wrath, for it is cruel:
I will disperse them in Jacob,
And scatter them in Israel.

JUDAH, thee thy brethren shall praise;
Thy hand is on the neck of thy enemies;
Thy father's sons shall prostrate themselves before thee.
Judah is a lion's whelp;
From the prey, my son, thou ascendest:
He stoopeth down, he croucheth, like a lion
And like a lioness; who will rouse him?
The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet —
Even when they come to Shiloh —
And to him shall be submission of nations.
He bindeth his foal to the vine,
And his young ass to the noble vine;
He washeth his garments in wine,
And his raiment in the blood of grapes;
His eyes are sparkling from wine,
And his teeth white from milk.

ZEBULUN will dwell on the coast of seas;
Indeed he will dwell on the coast of ships,
And his side will extend to Zidon.

ISSACHAR is a bony ass,
Crouching between the folds:
And he saw the rest that it was good,
And the land that it was pleasant;
And he bent his shoulder to bear,
And became a tributary servant.

DAN will judge his people
As one of the tribes of Israel.
Dan will be a serpent by the way,
A viper in the path,
That biteth the heels of the horse,
That its rider falleth backward. —
For Thy help I hope, O Lord! —

GAD, a host will oppress him:
But he will oppress them on their heels.

Of ASHER the bread will be fat,
And he will furnish royal dainties.

NAPHTALI is a graceful hind:
He uttereth words of beauty.

JOSEPH is a fruitful bough,
A fruitful bough by the well:
His branches spread over the wall.
And the archers harassed him,
And they assembled in multitude,
And they persecuted him;
But his bow remained in strength,
And the arms of his hands were brisk. —
From the hands of the Mighty of Jacob,
From Him, the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,
From the God of thy father who shall help thee,
And from the Almighty who shall bless thee,
Will come upon thee blessings of heaven from above,

Blessings of the deep that spreadeth beneath,
Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.
The blessings of thy father prevail
Above the blessings of the eternal mountains,
Above the delight of the everlasting hills:
They will come on the head of Joseph,
And on the brow of the crowned among his brethren.

BENJAMIN is a wolf that teareth to pieces:
In the morning he devoureth prey,
And at even he rendeth spoil."

The predictions of Jacob were fulfilled, not speedily in the land of Goshen, nor all of them in the time of the Judges, nor in the days of the first and the mightiest kings. They clearly reach down to the period of the divided empire. We cannot stop to examine in detail each verse of this prophetic address; but we will insert a few general remarks taken from a recent Commentary:

"The principal question, which arises, is: To what period of the history of the Israelites does this portion refer? or the political condition of what age does it describe? It appears to us manifest:

1. That it does *not* apply to a time *anterior to Saul;* for it contains unequivocal allusions to the royal dignity in the words, "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet."

2. It does *not* refer to *Saul's reign,* since the tribe of Benjamin, from which the monarch had sprung, is but very briefly and almost passingly noticed.

3. It cannot relate to the reigns of David and Solomon, since the tribe of Joseph is so delineated as to appear the powerful rival of Judah, and is, besides, also called "*the crowned* of his brethren."

4. It can therefore only apply to the time of the *divided empire,* with the *earlier* period of which the whole spirit and every single trait completely agree. It pourtrays a time when the tribes had individually ceased to possess a prominent history, or individually to achieve memorable deeds, such as they doubtless performed at the period of the conquest and the subsequent wars; Judah and Joseph alone, ruling over, if not absorbing, the other clans of Israel, were then still playing active and conspicuous parts; and hence they are alone treated with greater copiousness and almost ardent interest, while the others are introduced very briefly, and in some instances obscurely and almost abruptly." *

28. DEATH AND BURIAL OF JACOB, AND DEATH OF JOSEPH.

[Genes. XLIX. 29—L. 26.]

Jacob, shrinking from the idea of being buried in unhallowed Egyptian soil, said to his sons: "I am to be gathered to my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave which is in the field of Ephron the Hittite; in the cave which is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place (there they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah), as a purchase of the field and of the cave which is therein, from the children of Heth. And when Jacob had finished charging his sons, he gathered his feet into the bed, and expired, and was gathered to his people."

The last sad office was now all that remained for Joseph to perform for his father. In accordance with Egyptian customs, to which Joseph invariably conformed, he caused Jacob's body to be embalmed, and mourned for him

* *Kalisch,* Commentary on Genesis, pp. 722—724.

during seventy days together with his household. Then, eager to fulfil his father's last request, he begged Pharaoh for permission to go to Hebron for that purpose. Pharaoh of course readily complied, and Joseph set out immediately. His caravan was that of a mighty prince; for he was accompanied not only by his whole household, and his brothers and their dependents, but by all the servants or elders of Pharaoh's house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt; and "there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and the procession was very great." They halted once at the threshing-place of Atad, in the west of the Jordan, within the territory of the Canaanites, and here another seven days' mourning was held. Then they journeyed on, till they came to the field of Machpelah, where Jacob was buried. Thus Joseph beheld once more the country of his ancestors and his descendants; but he knew that he must end his life in the home of his adoption, far away from its sacred boundaries. He returned to his royal master, to whom he was indispensable as friend and counsellor.

But his brothers, still mindful of their crime and cruelty, trembled to think that his good-will toward them might cease with Jacob's life. They were afraid, and sent messengers to their powerful brother, with these words: "Thy father commanded before he died, saying, So shall you say to Joseph, O forgive, I pray thee, the trespass of thy brothers, and their sin; for they did to thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father; and Joseph wept when they spoke to him." In order to strengthen their prayer, they came themselves, and fell down before him, saying, "Behold, we are thy servants." Joseph's reply was beautiful in its humble simplicity, and yet embraced, with religious depth, the whole chain of events of his long career, "Fear not; for am I in God's stead? But as for you, you meant evil against

me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to preserve much people. Now, therefore, fear not: I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spoke kindly to them."

So they lived together in true brotherly friendship. Joseph was happy in his family; he saw his descendants grow up to the third generation, and died in peace, one hundred and ten years old. But before his death, he exacted from his kinsmen an oath, by which they pledged themselves to take his body with them, and to bury it in Canaan, whenever, by the mercy of God, they would be allowed to settle in the land of promise. They made the vow; and in order to enable their descendants to redeem it, they embalmed the body, and carefully preserved it in a chest.

Thus ended the life of Joseph, gently, peacefully, meekly; he died beloved by a great king, revered by the most learned nation of the ancient world, cherished by his own family, whose pride and support he had been, and who in Egypt were to increase and become a numerous people, to return, in due time, as conquerors, into the land of Canaan.

III. THE HISTORY OF MOSES.

[Exod. I—Deuteron. XXXIV.]

29. OPPRESSION OF THE HEBREWS IN EGYPT.

[Exod. I.]

The early generations of sturdy shepherd chiefs soon passed away. Indeed the whole scene changes, and the brilliant and prosperous days of the strangers hospitably received in the strange land, become darkened and saddened by slavery and oppression.

The generous king who had honoured and exalted Joseph, had been gathered to his fathers, and was succeeded by another Pharaoh, who had never known Joseph, the benefactor of his country. He felt no gratitude or goodwill towards the children of Israel, who had settled in one of the most fertile provinces of Egypt, and were growing alarmingly in number and power. God's blessing rested indeed upon the Hebrews, for from one family they rapidly increased into a nation.

Pharaoh looked with anxiety upon this foreign people, striking out their roots into the very heart of the country, and he summoned his counsellors to impart to them his apprehensions. "Behold," said he, "the children of Israel

are more numerous and stronger than we: come then, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass that when there happens any war, they join also with our enemies, and fight against us, and go up out of the land." And so they did "deal wisely" with them, as they thought; for they converted a free people into slaves, and they set severe task-masters over them, who afflicted and weighed them down with burdens. Instead of tending their flocks and herds in the fragrant pastures, the children of Israel were compelled to toil and drudge under a burning sun, building for Pharaoh vast towns and stupendous monuments. Pithom and Raamses, two store cities of Egypt, and probably situated in the north of Goshen, were built by the labour of the Israelites. The Pharaohs had an inordinate love for grand works of architecture. Colossal size was as essential to the Egyptians, as beauty to the Greeks. Their cities, their temples, their palaces, their tombs, were all on a gigantic scale, and the huge gods of the Egyptians towering high above their temple gates, struck awe into the minds of the worshippers. Vast numbers of workmen were necessary to carry out such immense structures. By forcing the Hebrews into hard service, Pharaoh gained the double end of founding large cities or erecting magnificent monuments, and of crushing that healthful spirit of independence and freedom which was so dangerously active among the foreign shepherd race.

But the God of Abraham had not forsaken His people; for the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and spread, until they became a terror to the Egyptians. Pharaoh resorted to severer measures. He increased their labour, and made them work in the brick-kilns and the fields, under the tyranny of pitiless task-masters. He employed them for "cutting canals, fortifying the cities with walls, raising dykes, and erecting pyramids."

But still Pharaoh deemed the slaves too powerful for his safety. He was resolved upon exterminating them. So he rigorously commanded the midwives to kill all the newborn sons of the Hebrews, and to let only the daughters live. But this inhuman decree was not carried out; no murderous hand was uplifted against the infants of the Israelites: the midwives feared God and would not obey Pharaoh. Then the king laid his command upon the whole people, making every citizen responsible for its execution: "Every son that is born you shall cast into the Nile, but every daughter you shall save alive."

30. BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF MOSES.

[Exod. II.]

Such was the sad condition of the Hebrews when a child was born among them, who was destined to be the instrument of their deliverance. His parents were Amram and Jochebed, both descendants of Levi. They had two elder children, Miriam and Aaron; the former was already a young maiden, the latter three years old, when this third child, another son, was added to their family. The unfortunate mother was too well aware of Pharaoh's decree, but anxiously devised plans which left her some faint hope of saving her last-born. She hid him carefully for three months; but when she found it impossible to conceal him any longer, she exposed him among the flags at the banks of the Nile, in a chest of bulrushes, which she daubed with bitumen and with pitch: the bulrushes were as close and hard as wood, the bitumen from within was a protection from the spikes of the rushes, and the pitch from without was to seal the ark from the entrance of the water. When Jochebed had deposited the chest in the river,

she bid her daughter Miriam remain at some distance, to watch over its fate.

It happened that, on that day, Pharaoh's daughter, accompanied by her maidens, walked down to the river's side to bathe. Perceiving the ark among the flags, she sent one of her attendants to fetch it. As it was opened, she was startled by the cries of a weeping boy. The forlorn helplessness of the poor infant touched the heart of the princess; she knew the cruel mandates of her father, and obviously disapproved of them. "This is one of the Hebrew children," she exclaimed; her voice must have been soft with pity, for the watchful sister of the child advanced and asked anxiously, "Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?" And Pharaoh's daughter said, "Go." Then Miriam sped home to fetch her mother who, soon arriving, was addressed by the princess with the welcome words: "Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." Jochebed took the boy home again and nursed him. But when he grew and was weaned, the mother gave him back to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him as her son. And she called his name Moses, saying, "Because I drew him out of the water."

So Moses was reared in the palace of the king of Egypt, in the midst of all that was learned and wise in that land of scholars. But he was not forgetful of his poor toiling brethren; he had a warm and loving heart unspoiled by the luxuries and honours with which he was surrounded from his childhood. He did not keep aloof from his countrymen, but went out into the fields, and there witnessed their oppressive and exhausting labour. He once beheld an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew; it was more than his indignant spirit could bear; and with an impatient outburst of anger he determined to punish the offender. They were

alone and unwatched; and Moses slew the Egyptian, and buried him in the sand. On the following day, he returned again to the fields, and this time he found two Hebrews quarrelling. Moses had a strong sense of justice; he said to the man he saw to be in the wrong, "Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow-man?" The Hebrew replied spitefully and angrily, "Who made thee a superior and judge over us? Dost thou intend to kill me, as thou hast killed the Egyptian?" Moses trembled at these words which proved that his violent deed of the preceding day had become known. It had in fact even reached the ears of Pharaoh, who was determined to avenge it by death. Moses saw that his only safety was in flight.

He at once carried out his resolve, and escaped to the land of Midian. This district is situated in Arabia, between mount Sinai, Edom, and Canaan. The people were a nomadic and pastoral tribe, whose manners and customs carry us back to the early scenes in the lives of the patriarchs. As in the history of Isaac and Jacob, the well surrounded by shepherds and their flocks, plays an important part in the present narrative. Moses sat down to rest at the principal well before a town, knowing that he would soon be joined by shepherds. He had not been waiting long, when he perceived seven maidens advancing with their flocks. They proved to be the daughters of the chief priest and magistrate of the Midianites. They came up to the well and began drawing water to fill the gutter; but other shepherds soon arrived and drove them away. Again Moses interceded for the weak and the wronged; he arose and helped the maidens and watered their flocks for them, so that when they returned to Reuel (or Jethro), their father, he said, "How is it that you came so soon to-day?" And they told him of the courtesy shown to them by the Egyptian whom they had met at the well. Full of gratitude and hospitable feel-

ings, the Bedouin priest said, "Where then is he? why is it that you have left the man? call him that he may eat bread." And in this way, Moses, the adopted child of Pharaoh's daughter, came to live in the tents of Reuel, the chief of a free and hardy people; and there he married Zipporah, the daughter of his host. Yet his heart had not ceased to feel for his brethren in the land of their oppression; and, though himself safe and happy, he grieved for their misery, and longed to return to them to share or to relieve it, and when a son was born to him, he called him Gershom, for he said, "I am a stranger in a strange land."

31. THE MISSION OF MOSES TO PHARAOH.

[Exod. III. 1—VII. 14.]

Meanwhile the cruel king of Egypt had died, but he was followed by another Pharaoh not more compassionate towards the Israelites, who were still compelled to toil and slave in hard bondage. They cried to God, and God heard their piteous supplication, and remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

As the instrument of His deliverance, He selected Moses, whose youth had been spent in the palace of an Egyptian despot, and whose manhood had been passed in the free and pure simplicity of Arab life. He imparted His designs to him by direct communications, and thus raised him at once to a singular spiritual distinction.

Whilst Moses was tending the flocks of his father-in-law, he perceived a flame of fire bursting out of a thorn-bush. The angel of the Lord was in the flame; for although the bush was burning, it was not consumed. Filled with astonishment and awe, Moses was hastening towards the spot, when he was arrested by a voice calling, "Moses, Moses!" It was the voice of the Lord. He answered, "Here

am I." And God spoke to him again and said, "Approach not hither, put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Then the Lord revealed Himself as the God of his ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon the Divine glory. And the Lord said: "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry about their task-masters; indeed I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver them out of that land into a good and large land, into a land flowing with milk and honey. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee to Pharaoh that thou mayest bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt." This last charge so suddenly and unexpectedly given to Moses, the diffident and humble-minded, filled him with uneasiness and fear: how could he, now a lowly shepherd, dare to approach the proud king, and demand the release of the enslaved people, who were so useful to the tyrant's ambitious plans? The Israelites themselves would mistrust his words, and Pharaoh would expel him from his presence with disgrace. Then the Lord assured Moses again of His powerful protection, and promised, besides, to arm him with signs and wonders which would leave no doubt that he had come with Divine authority, and which would convince the Hebrew disbelievers, and confound the Egyptian sages. Moses himself should be the human deliverer of his people from their thraldom. But still the modest man shrank from the overwhelming task entrusted to him. He possessed the love of justice and truth, that great incentive to noble deeds, but he lacked the self-confidence necessary to their accomplishment. He asked despondingly: "When I come to the children of Israel,

and shall say to them, The God of your fathers has sent me to you, and if they say to me, What is His name? what shall I say to them?" And God, revealing to His messenger His mysterious attributes of eternity and unchangeableness, replied: "*I am that I am*; thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, *I am* has sent me to you." Then He encouraged him again and bade him, on his arrival in Egypt, assemble the elders of Israel in order to comfort them by the certain promise that they would inherit the land of Canaan, and then appear fearlessly before Pharaoh, and ask his permission to allow the Hebrews to go a three days' journey into the wilderness for the purpose of offering up sacrifices to Him. "Yet, I know," said the Lord, "that the king of Egypt will not let you go, even not by a mighty hand. Therefore, I will stretch out My hand and smite Egypt with all My wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof; and after that he will let you go. And I shall give this people favour in the eyes of the Egyptians; and it will come to pass, that when you go, you will not go empty: but every woman shall ask of her neighbour, and of her that sojourns in her house, articles of silver and articles of gold, and raiment; and you shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters, and you shall plunder the Egyptians." Still Moses felt his own weakness, and he said, "Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice, for they will say, The Lord has not appeared to thee." God, gracious to Moses, and loving him for his meekness, inspired him with new courage. First he commanded him to throw down his staff, which instantly became a serpent; and when Moses seized it by its tail, it returned to its original form, and became a staff again. Then the Lord bid him put his hand into his bosom: he did so; and when he drew it out, it was leprous and white as snow; then putting it once more into his bosom, it became well again. If this was not sufficient,

Moses was to take water from the Nile and pour it out on the dry land, when it would be turned into blood. It was obvious that the Israelites would believe in the words of a man who came to them with such supernatural powers. But now Moses urged another difficulty: he felt that a man who is to move the multitude, and to kindle the enthusiasm of a nation, must be endowed with eloquence; but the gift of language was denied to him; he was slow of speech; how could he persuade Pharaoh to yield, or induce his own countrymen to aid him in his schemes of deliverance? But God said to him: "Who has made man's mouth? or who makes dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Do not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I shall be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." Yet the diffidence of Moses was not conquered in the slightest degree: as if he had heard no argument, received no Divine assurance, he simply exclaimed, "I beseech Thee, my Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand of any one whom Thou wilt send." This reluctance which, creditable in itself, became reproachful by its excess, justly roused the anger of God who replied: "Do I not know Aaron the Levite, thy brother, that he can speak well? and also behold, he comes forth to meet thee, and when he sees thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak to him, and put the words in his mouth: and I shall be with thy mouth, and shall teach thee what to do. And he shall speak for thee to the people, and he shall indeed be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of a God. And thou shalt take this staff into thy hand, wherewith thou shalt do the signs."

Moses, now at last yielding to the Divine behest, summoned courage, and resolved upon his immediate departure. He went to his father-in-law Jethro, and requested his permission to return to Egypt, pleading that he was desirous to see whether his brethren were yet alive. Jethro readily

and cheerfully gave his assent to the proposed journey; so Moses set off accompanied by his wife Zipporah and their two sons; for a second son Eliezer had but lately been born to them. They travelled southward through Midian, and passed through the wilderness of Arabia. It was here that Aaron came to meet Moses; the two brothers found each other at mount Horeb, and there Aaron heard from the inspired lips of his younger brother the glorious mission with which he had been entrusted, and was told of the signs which he was to perform before the Egyptians and the Israelites. Full of faith and growing courage, Moses and Aaron continued their journey.

As soon as they arrived in Egypt, they assembled the elders of the Hebrews, and informed them of their Divine charge. They told them how once more the Hebrews were to be a free people, how they were to live in their own land, following their own worship, glorifying the One God, abiding by His decrees. Egypt, the land of slavery and idolatry, was to be left for ever. To the eager listeners, these words brought hope and consolation; the messengers of the glad tidings were their own kinsmen, men who were manifestly strengthened by the power of the Lord, whose words seemed imbued with the Divine spirit, and whose miraculous staff performed wonders before their eyes. They saw and heard, and they believed firmly, and in a transport of gratitude and fervour prostrated themselves before their eternal Deliverer. The moment had now arrived for Moses and Aaron to proceed to the palace, and to appear before Pharaoh himself. Fearlessly the two brothers came into the great king's presence with words which to the despot sounded like a command: "Thus has the Lord God of Israel said, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the desert." Pharaoh replied haughtily and tauntingly: "Who is the Lord whose voice I shall obey to let Israel

go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Vain were the remonstrances of Moses and Aaron, vain the pleading of the people. Pharaoh, enraged at the bold request of the enslaved nation, exclaimed, "Wherefore do you, Moses and Aaron, disturb the people from their works? Go you to your burdens." Not content with his disdainful refusal, he determined to add to the hardships of the Israelites. He increased their labour by not giving them straw for the bricks, and exacting, notwithstanding, the same number of bricks as before. "They are idle," said the king, "therefore they cry, Let us go and sacrifice to our God: let the work be hard upon the men, so that they may have fully to do with it, and not listen to vain words." The task-masters went out to enforce these unfeeling commands, which fell heavily upon the hearts of the oppressed people sighing for freedom. In sorrow they dispersed through the land to gather stubble instead of straw. But they toiled in vain; they were unable to finish their heavy task, and their overseers, who were held responsible for its accomplishment, were inhumanly beaten by the Egyptian task-masters. And when the Hebrew overseers cried to Pharaoh at the injustice of his servants, they heard again the same cruel words: "You are idle, you are idle; therefore you say, Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord. Go, therefore, now, and work, for no straw shall be given you, yet shall you deliver the tale of bricks." In an agony of despair, the overseers went to Moses and Aaron, and upbraided them in all the bitterness of their hearts. Was not their fate worse now than it had ever been before? Did it not seem as if they must perish by the hatred of an enraged king, manifestly determined to crush them? Help seemed far off indeed. Even Moses trembled; he doubted his mission; but he carried his fear to the Lord, and sent up to Him a touching, desponding supplication: "Wherefore hast Thou

done so evil to Thy people, wherefore is it that Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh, to speak in Thy name, he has done evil to this people, and hast Thou in any way delivered Thy people?" The Lord answered the prayer of Moses, and never before had His majesty and omnipotence been pronounced in words so distinct and so solemn: "Now shalt thou see what I shall do to Pharaoh, for by a strong hand will he send them away, and by a strong hand will he drive them out of his land;" — and He continued: "I am the Lord; I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by My name the *Eternal* was I not known to them." Thus Moses was placed at a high spiritual pre-eminence above the patriarchs. Abraham, it is true, had been led throughout his life by the direct word of God; in like manner the Divine spirit lingered around the calm and pensive Isaac; it cheered and counselled the wanderings and trials of Jacob; and Joseph, though not so constantly favoured, had been specially watched over, and brought to a glorious destiny. But Moses was to witness the wondrous redemption of God's people; he was to see the realization of the promises made to his forefathers by virtue of solemn covenants. His conception of the Heavenly Father was to be more complete and more sublime; he was to understand Him not only as the "All-powerful" God (אֱלֹהִים), but as the "Eternal" (יְהוָה), whose will and glory exist for ever, and whose word is unfailing.

But the Israelites were crushed in spirit; they turned away from prospects of hope and gladness; they ceased to believe in their freedom: "they hearkened not to Moses through shortness of breath and through hard bondage." Therefore, when the Lord commanded Moses to go again to Pharaoh, and to repeat the old request, Moses not unnaturally answered: "Behold, the children of Israel have

not hearkened to me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips? But the Lord bade Moses not be afraid; He would arm him with Divine power to move Pharaoh, while Aaron would be his "prophet", the man of commanding eloquence able to express his thoughts; and He added: "I shall harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not hearken to you, and I shall lay My hand upon Egypt, and bring forth My hosts, My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt, by great judgments." The two brothers now once more appeared before Pharaoh. But to strike the idolatrous Egyptians with awe and reverence, "signs and wonders" were necessary.

Aaron cast his staff down before Pharaoh, and it changed into a serpent. The king, seeing the miracle, sent for wise men and sorcerers, who also cast their staffs upon the ground, and likewise changed them into serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Not touched by the marvel, Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he refused to listen to the commands of the Lord.

32. THE TEN EGYPTIAN PLAGUES.

[Exod. VII. 14—XI. 10.]

The Bible now relates one of the most terrible and fearful calamities ever brought upon a country by the infatuation and blindness of its ruler. Pharaoh was warned in time, and warned repeatedly and strongly, but all in vain. Full of pride and presumption, he rose in combat against the God of heaven and earth. But the weapons of the Lord were plagues, each one more awful than its forerunner, smiting king and people with dismay and destruction. Moses, modest and humble, appears as the fearless and faithful worker of His great Master's will: he was the

first to whom the power was given of performing miracles in the name of the Lord.

The history of the Egyptian plagues is indeed unequalled in the annals of the world. Although they followed each other in the short space of a few months, and although they were unusually violent in their effect, and afflicted the Egyptians alone, while they left the Israelites uninjured — features which show their miraculous character; yet they were all connected with or based upon natural causes and phenomena.

First, the waters of the land of Egypt were to be turned into blood. Moses warned Pharaoh of the approaching calamity, and then walking down with Aaron to the brink of the river, he raised his staff, smote the waters, and converted them into streams of blood. All the people of Egypt and the king himself beheld this miracle; they saw the fish die as the blood flowed over the land; and they turned with disgust from the offensive smell of the sacred river. It was impossible for them to drink of the water of the Nile, usually far-famed for its delicious taste; and they were forced to dig deep into the ground for water. But Pharaoh would not relent.

Seven days the plague lasted, and then Aaron stretched forth his staff, and frogs appeared in appalling multitudes. Frogs were always more or less a bane to the Egyptians, but never before had they been seen coming in such incredible numbers out of the river and the canals and the fields, and filling the cities and houses. They penetrated into the very chambers; nothing was secure from their intrusion; they were on the couches, in the ovens, in the kneading troughs, and on the persons of the people themselves. The sorcerers of Egypt, anxious to show their power, tried likewise to produce frogs. They were permitted to succeed, but they could not allay the evil. Pharaoh turned at last to Moses and Aaron in despair. "Entreat the Lord," he exclaimed, "that

" He may take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I shall willingly let the people go that they may sacrifice to the Lord." Moses cried to God, to grant the prayer of Pharaoh, and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courts, and out of the fields. But when the king of Egypt saw this respite, he hardened his heart anew, and hearkened not to the children of Israel.

Again the anger of the Lord was kindled, and a third plague was sent. Commanded by God, Aaron stretched forth his staff and changed the dust of the earth into gnats. These terrible mosquito flies are well known to the Egyptians; they usually appear during the hot months of the year, and breed in the slime of the river Nile. They are extremely small, but their sting is most painful, they molest man and beast, and even penetrate into the eyes, ears, and noses of their unfortunate victims. But at that time all the dust of the earth seemed winged, and clouds of the tormentors arose from the river, and fastened upon their prey. The magicians were helpless; they could neither produce nor exterminate the dangerous insects. They were obliged to confess to Pharaoh, "This is indeed the finger of God."

Then the Lord smote Egypt with another plague, the beetles, while the district of Goshen, the main abode of the Israelites, was spared. The land itself, teeming with luxuriant vegetation, suffered heavily. The voracity of the beetles is well-known; they abound in Egypt, like the gnat and the frog, but are regarded with even greater fear and disgust. This time they came in prodigious numbers, flying into the houses of the Egyptians, and covering the ground. Then Pharaoh trembled; he felt, that he must bend before the Almighty; and though full of pride and resentment, he was inclined to make concessions to Moses and Aaron. "Go you," he said to them, "and sacrifice to your God in the

land," that is, not beyond the boundaries of the land, but in Egypt itself. But to this Moses objected; how could the Hebrews slay, and offer up as sacrifices to their God, the animals held sacred by the Egyptians? For surely they would be stoned by the people; whereas a three days' journey would bring them into the desert, where they might sacrifice to the Lord in peace. Pharaoh, tortured and humbled, consented to their departure: "I will let you go," he said, "that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the desert; only you shall not go very far away; entreat for me." So the plague ceased. But this was only a signal for Pharaoh to harden his heart again, and to retract his permission.

The plagues, steadily increasing in terrible fearfulness, now assumed the form of pestilence among beasts. This is a word of awful significance to the Egyptians; for the scourge of pestilence, occasioned by the fierce rays of the sun and the dry heat of the soil, often desolates the land. How must the people have grieved when they saw their stately horses, the pride of Egypt, perish; when all the cattle of the fields were stricken at the word of Moses; when the animals upon which they looked as gods, or as the favoured symbols of the gods, died smitten by the plague! How could they pray to those deities for relief? They had, moreover, the mortification to see the beasts of the Israelites entirely unhurt. Yet Pharaoh, though well aware of the greatness of the misfortune, still hardened his heart, and would not let the children of Israel go.

Then followed the sixth plague, which was so painful and so loathsome that it must have struck the people of Egypt with horror and agony. God commanded Moses to take soot from the furnaces, and to sprinkle it towards heaven; and as Moses did so, boils burst forth upon man and beast throughout the land of Egypt. Among all Eastern

nations, none were so scrupulously clean as the Egyptians; their priests bathed several times a day, shaved their faces most carefully, and, unlike the Bedouins, preferred linen to woolen garments, because linen is less apt to harbour vermin. When therefore they were visited by such a disgusting illness, they must have been seized with unspeakable horror and shame. The priests, and the wise men belonging to the sacred caste, suffered with the rest, and could not appear before Moses. This plague was evidently of short duration, for we do not hear that Moses was requested to pray to God for its cessation.

But Pharaoh's heart was still hardened, and he persisted in his refusal to allow the departure of the Israelites. Therefore, after duly warning the king, the Lord smote again the land of Egypt. However, those Egyptians who believed in the God of the Israelites, and heeded the word of Moses, were to be exempted from the fearful infliction. A hail-storm of unprecedented violence was to sweep the land; no living thing, no tree, no herb, was to escape its fury unhurt; safety was only to be found in the shelter of the houses; those, therefore, who believed and were afraid, might keep in their homes, and drive their cattle into the sheds. Some of the Egyptians took this counsel to heart; but the reckless and the stubborn left their cattle with their servants in the fields. When Moses stretched forth his staff, the elements began their awful strife. The storms in the East, though rare, are truly appalling, and terrify the most courageous and the most tranquil-minded. But none is recorded of so fearful a character as that which then burst over the much-tried land of Egypt. The hail poured down with violence, deafening thunder rolled over the earth, and lightning rent the heavens, and ran like fire along the ground. The majesty of the Lord was revealed in that grand spectacle. The hail did its work of destruc-

tion; man and beast who were exposed to its rage, died on the spot; the herbs were scattered to the wind, the trees lay shivered on the ground. But the land of Goshen, free from the ravages of the storm, bloomed like a garden amidst the general devastation. Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and acknowledged his sins. "The Lord is righteous," he said, "and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord, for it is already too much, that there should be no more thundering and hail; and I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer." Moses replied: "When I am gone out of the city, I shall spread out my hands to the Lord; and the thunder will cease, neither will there be any more hail, that thou mayest know that the earth is the Lord's." And it happened as Moses had said; the storm ceased — but Pharaoh's heart remained hardened.

Scarcely less fearful than any of the preceding plagues was the eighth which at once followed. Pharaoh was forewarned, for Aaron went to him to announce the will of God, and to bid him pause before he called down upon the country swarms of locusts. It was no imaginary evil that the threat implied; every one was familiar with the terrible scourge of the dreaded locusts, whose arrival was feared more than that of a hostile army. There exists indeed no more fatal destroyer of all vegetable life. The locusts that infest Egypt, are children of the desert. They are active, eager, and fierce. They appear flying together in such vast numbers, and so compactly, that they seem like a cloud passing over the earth. Where they descend upon the ground, they cover it like a wide black veil for many leagues. They eat voraciously, devouring everything that comes in their way, and leaving behind them a bare and desolate waste.

It was this awful calamity that Aaron predicted to Pharaoh. The people felt keenly the impending horrors of

the plague: was not their country ruined already and devastated? had it not been swept by the terrific hail-storm, and should it now be exposed to the still more fatal fury of the locusts? For the first time, they implored the king to grant the request of the Israelites. They hastened after Moses and Aaron, and brought them back to the monarch's throne, in order, if possible, to prevent the evil. Pharaoh was for a moment disposed to yield: "Go," said he, "serve the Lord your God; but who are they that will go?" And Moses repeated what the king of Egypt had so often heard before: "With our young and with our old will we go, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go, for we have a feast to the Lord." But Pharaoh's proud spirit revolted from giving his consent to this request, which he not unjustly felt was meant to hide deeper schemes on the part of the Hebrews; if he permitted their departure, it should be under conditions which would oblige them to return; and he exclaimed in anger and exasperation: "So may the Lord be with you as I shall let you go and your children: see, that you have evil plans before you. Not so; go now, you men, and serve the Lord, for that have you desired." Thus Moses and Aaron were driven from the presence of Pharaoh.

Then came the plague as had been predicted. When Moses stretched out his staff, an east-wind arose and brought the locusts from the regions of the Red Sea in vast clouds over the land. More numerous, more terrible than they had ever been seen before, they descended on the fields, on the trees, on the fruits, and rapidly, as if by enchantment, changed the whole country into an arid desert. Ruin and famine were the hideous spectres that followed them. Pharaoh hastened to send for Moses, and confessing his sin, entreated forgiveness. Then Moses prayed to the Lord, and a strong west-wind arose, and blew the locusts into the

Red Sea. The land was freed; but Pharaoh hardened his heart once more, and would not let the children of Israel go.

Then followed quickly the ninth plague, which, unlike its predecessors, neither caused physical distress to the people, nor brought still further ruin upon the desolate land. But it was one of those awful and mysterious dispensations calculated to impress the senses and the mind with fear and horror. The ninth plague was total and absolute darkness. During three days a thick and impenetrable veil hung over the land of Egypt, no one could move from his place—but the Hebrews had light in their dwellings. Now it must be remembered that to the Egyptians the Sun was an object of worship. The city of On with its temples and priests was consecrated to the Sun; Pharaoh himself, as has been observed above, means son of the Sun. In a moment, that great deity was obscured by the God of Israel; Osiris strove in vain to dispel the darkness; he had lost his golden rays.

Dismayed and alarmed, Pharaoh sent for Moses, bidding him depart instantly with all his people, and only leave their flocks and herds behind as a pledge. But no, this could not be agreed to; Moses emphatically declared: "Our cattle shall also go with us, not one hoof shall remain behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God." — But Pharaoh hardened his heart as before, and would not let them go. He was enraged against that wise but humble servant of God who defied his own power, and he exclaimed: "Go away from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for on that day thou seest my face thou shalt die." And Moses replied: "Thou hast spoken right, I will see thy face again no more."

We now approach the tenth plague which, as it was the last, was also the most terrible. It was the final struggle in that awful warfare between God and man; it proved the complete overthrow of the Egyptian king.

Moses had obtained a celebrity throughout the land of Egypt, which had probably never before been surpassed, not even with regard to the great royal favourite Joseph. His wisdom excelled that of the priests and magicians; he foretold events that invariably came to pass; he performed the most astonishing miracles; his staff brought disasters, which his prayer alone could stay; he appeared in the name of the great God of the Hebrews; and he stood boldly in the presence of the king, warning him of evil, firmly insisting upon his demands, resolutely refusing to make the smallest concession. Was it wonderful that the Egyptians looked upon him with awe? He gained their admiration still more because, with all the power granted to him by God, he was ever meek and modest, ever distrustful of his gifts, considering himself as the feeble instrument for carrying out a Divine mission. His great courage coupled with supreme humility could not fail to impress the Egyptians. And for his sake, the Israelites found favour in their sight. — Thus, when the Lord made known to him the nature of the last plague, and bid him tell the people to ask for silver and gold from their Egyptian neighbours, the masters readily gave to the enslaved strangers their trinkets, and ornaments, and costly vessels. Everything had been foretold by God to Moses, who now, in a last interview, communicated to Pharaoh the impending and terrible visitation in these words. "Thus says the Lord, about midnight shall I go out into the midst of Egypt, and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits upon the throne, to the firstborn of the handmaid who is behind the mill, and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog sharpen his tongue, against man

or beast; that you may know that the Lord distinguishes between the Egyptians and between Israel. And all these thy servants shall come down to me, and shall bow down themselves to me, saying, Go out, thou and all thy people that follow thee: and after that, I shall go out."

Then Moses turned away in anger from the king who by his blind stubbornness brought unspeakable calamities upon his people.

33. INSTITUTION OF THE PASSOVER; DEPARTURE OF THE HEBREWS FROM EGYPT.

[Exod. XII.]

The tenth plague was to be the signal of the exodus of the Hebrews and of their redemption. The death of the firstborn among the Egyptians was the new life of the Hebrews, the midnight visit of the angel of destruction was their trumpet note announcing the dawn of freedom. So glorious, so important was the release from Egypt that the very month in which it took place, was henceforth to be considered the beginning of the year, the first of months.

But before their departure, the people were once more assembled to listen to the Divine commands conveyed to them by Moses. — Four days previous to the night of the exodus, the chief of each household was to select a male lamb or kid, one year old, without blemish; he was to kill it towards the evening of the day appointed for the flight, and to put its blood, by means of a bunch of hyssop, on the two side-posts and on the lintels of the houses. The animal was to be roasted entire, and consumed completely in that night, together with cakes of unleavened bread and bitter herbs. With girded loins, with staffs in their hands, with sandals on their feet, should the Israelites take this hasty meal before their longed-for deliverance. As on account of the

suddenness of their escape, they would have no time to bake their bread, they were ordered to eat and to carry away with them unleavened cakes. At midnight the angel of the Lord would pass through the land, and slay the firstborn in every Egyptian house; but where he saw the blood on the door-posts, he would pass by without harming the Hebrews. Distinct were the commands of Moses, complete in every detail; they instituted the first of the festivals, the Passover of the Lord. For that night was to be sacred in all future ages; it was to be an ordinance for all generations. As years rolled on, and each brought back the bright spring time, rich with memories of the past, the Israelites were to assemble together, to recall by the paschal lamb, the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, and the seven days of thanksgiving and rejoicing, both their grievous bondage in Egypt and their wonderful departure from that inhospitable land. From their exodus, the political life of the Hebrews as a nation must be dated; until then they had only been a tribe or a number of families; they were now to be organised into a people, with a lawgiver unrivalled for wisdom in the history of the world, with warriors famous for wonderful feats of bravery, and above all with prophets destined to be the guides and teachers of unborn ages. The chosen people became now signally God's nation, elected to transmit His truth from age to age, and certain to conquer all other nations, as long as they remained faithful to His worship.

To this character of the festival all individual ordinances were thoughtfully adapted. Hebrews alone were to partake of the paschal meal: for no stranger could properly share a repast designed to show the Hebrew families as organic parts of the Hebrew nation. The lamb was to be roasted whole, without a bone being broken: for it was to express the unity of the people of Israel, a unity most

essential for the accomplishment of their great mission, in enabling them to defend their pure faith against the idolatries of other nations.

It was furthermore enjoined that the firstborn of man and beast should be sacred to God. This law entrusted the control and responsibility in matters of religion to the head of the household; on him devolved the special care of the family, and it was his duty to attend to the exact fulfilment of all sacred observances.

Lastly, as a memorial of the exodus and of the new religious and political life of the Israelites, symbols were commanded to be worn upon the hand and on the forehead, pointing to deed and thought — "so that the Law of the Lord may be in thy mouth, for with a strong hand has the Lord brought thee out of Egypt." These symbols, later called Tephillin or phylacteries, consisted of certain important passages taken from the Law, written on parchment and enclosed in small wooden boxes; and unlike the charms and amulets of many eastern tribes and of most southern nations of the present day, they were merely remembrances of a wonderful redemption, signs of a solemn covenant with God, and monitors to a life of faith and virtue.

When Moses had explained all these injunctions, the people, deeply impressed, silently bowed their heads and prostrated themselves, and then hastened to their houses to prepare the paschal lamb. At midnight, the angel of the Lord passed through the land, smiting with death the firstborn of every Egyptian household. There was a loud and bitter wail in each house—a loved one lay fatally stricken. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in that very night, and said to them: "Arise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord as you have said; and take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also." At last

then, the pride of the stubborn king was broken. Meanwhile the Hebrews were preparing for their hasty departure. With beating hearts, they assembled in groups to eat the paschal lamb. They stood at the midnight meal, arrayed as they had been commanded. The women had taken from the ovens the unleavened cakes, which were eaten with the meat of the roasted lamb. The preparations were at last concluded; all was ready—the tents were slung on poles; the animals bore on their backs women and children, or were laden with the possessions of the Hebrews, with the common necessaries of life, with the gold and silver treasures furnished by the Egyptians. At the word of command, the whole nation of the Hebrews poured forth in the cool still Eastern night. But not even amidst their trepidation and danger did they forget the pledge given by their ancestors to Joseph, and they carried his remains with them, to inter them later in the land of promise. They safely escaped out of the province of Goshen, where their race had dwelt for four hundred and thirty years; and led by Moses and Aaron, they wandered forth, a host of six hundred thousand armed men with their wives and children — a free nation.

34. PHARAOH'S PURSUIT AND DESTRUCTION.

[Exod. XIII. XIV.]

It will be remembered that in the history of the patriarchs, the journey from Canaan to Egypt has repeatedly been mentioned. It was accomplished, in a comparatively short time, by Abraham and Joseph, then by Jacob's other sons, and finally by Jacob himself and his whole family. But then the travellers defiled along the narrow mountain passes of Engadi, and keeping in sight of the waters of the Mediterranean, proceeded along the north coast of Egypt.

Not so did Moses and the enormous host which followed his guidance. The land of promise was farther distant for them than it had been for Abraham, and no safe and straight caravan road was to lead them to the groves of Hebron and to the beautiful valley of the Jordan. They were, as yet, unable to stand against the powerful and warlike tribes, such as the Philistines, through whose territory they would have been obliged to pass. By forty long and weary years of wandering in the desert, they were to be trained, to become a brave and independent nation, and to deserve their distinction as the people of God.

During that fearful night when terror seized all Egyptians, the Israelites marched, or rather fled from Rameses, their place of assembly, in a south-easterly direction, to Succoth, their first resting place. — One day's march more southward brought them to Etham on the edge of the wilderness; from here they had to turn back northward, in order to arrive nearer the northern extremity of the gulf of Suez, where the passage was practicable; and they encamped "before Pi-hahiroth between Migdol and the sea against Baal-Zephon," probably at the place of the later town Kolsoum, where subsequently Suez was built, surrounded in the north, west, and south by the desert, and in the East bordering on the Red Sea. This backward movement of the Hebrews appeared to the Egyptians like helpless perplexity, and suggested to them the idea — "they are entangled in the land; the wilderness has shut them in." But though the host was led by Moses, the Lord Himself guided them in a pillar of smoke by day, in a pillar of fire by night.

Meanwhile Pharaoh had recovered from the consternation of the tenth plague, and great was his dismay at the speedy flight of the Israelites. There seemed but one course open to him — to pursue the fugitives, and to force them

back, slaves for evermore. The will of a despot is law; six hundred chosen war-chariots, all equipped with the fleet Egyptian horse, driven by skilful charioteers, and bearing the flower of the Egyptian army, were instantly assembled. Headed by the king himself, they hastened on and overtook the Israelites at Pi-hahiroth. When these beheld in the distance the chariots and the warriors of their enemies, their fear was boundless. They turned to Moses upbraiding him: "Because there were no graves in Egypt," they exclaimed, "hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou done this to us, to lead us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we spoke to thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? For it is better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." They were ready to lay down their arms, and to take back their chains. But Moses, calm and firm in one of the most trying moments of his eventful life, said: "Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day: for as you have seen the Egyptians to-day, you shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall keep yourselves quiet."

Then Moses led the Israelites onwards until they came to the very borders of the Red Sea. The pillar of the Lord now changed its position; for retreating from the front to the rear of the Hebrew hosts, it floated between the two armies; over the Israelites it shed a bright brilliancy, while it spread a veil of darkness over the Egyptians. But the Israelites seemed now hopelessly hemmed in between overwhelming dangers — the Egyptians were close behind them, and the waves of the Red Sea were breaking at their feet; — the steep mountain passes threatened to the right, the wilderness to the left. But glorious was their deliverance. Moses, commanded by the Lord, raised his staff, and stretch-

ed his hand over the sea; a strong east-wind rose and blew the whole night. By that storm, the waters of the Red Sea were divided, and gathered into a wall on either side, leaving a dry passage in the midst. The Israelites, awed by the miracle, marched at once along that dry path which extended from shore to shore. They gained the opposite side in safety. The Egyptians continued their pursuit without hesitation in the same track. They were doomed to discomfiture and destruction: the wheels of their chariots became clogged in the bed of the Sea, and glided off. They were unable to proceed; and they felt that they were once more vainly struggling against the Lord. They turned to flee, but it was too late; for at the command of God, Moses stretched forth his staff, the waters resumed their usual course, and closed over the chariots and horses and warriors, over the whole host of Pharaoh; "there remained not so much as one of them."

35. THE SONG OF MOSES AND THE HEBREWS AT THE RED SEA.

[Exod. XV. 1—21.]

In the dim light of the early dawn, the Israelites, gathered in trembling groups on the eastern borders of the Red Sea, witnessed the sudden and complete annihilation of their terrible foes: then they turned in happiness and gratitude towards Moses, and they trusted and believed their great leader, the servant and messenger of the Lord. Their faith, so weak, so easily shaken, now grew stronger, and they began to fear the God of their ancestors. A transport of joy and of triumph filled the heart of Moses, and it burst forth in the following glorious hymn:

"I will sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously exalted: the horse and its rider has He thrown into the sea. The

Lord is my praise and song, for He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will glorify Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war: the Eternal is His name. Pharaoh's hosts and his chariots has He thrown into the sea: his choicest warriors are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O Lord, glorified in power, Thy right hand, O Lord, dashes in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of Thy sublimity Thou overthrowest those who rise up against Thee: Thou sendest forth Thy wrath, it consumes them as stubble. And with the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were piled up, the floods stood upright like a mound, and the depths congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue; overtake; divide the spoil; my lust be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them: Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who is like Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, awful in praises, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand — the earth swallowed them.

Thou in Thy mercy leadest forth the people which Thou hast redeemed; Thou guidest them in Thy strength to Thy holy habitation. The nations will hear it, and will be afraid; terror will seize the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom will be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling will seize them; all the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away with fear. Fear and dread will fall upon them; by the greatness of Thy arm they will be dumb as stone; till they pass, O Lord, till the people pass, which Thou hast acquired. Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thy inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thy abode, in the sanct-

uary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. The Lord will reign for ever and ever."

As the last words of the song died away, Miriam, inspired with the same feelings of gladness and thanksgiving, seized her timbrel, and followed by a multitude of Hebrew maidens and women, went forth in procession dancing and chanting: "Sing ye to the Lord, for He is gloriously exalted; the horse and its rider has He thrown into the sea."

36. MARCH OF THE HEBREWS TO MARAH AND ELIM; THE MANNA AND QUAILS.

[Exod. XV. 22—XVI. 35.]

The Israelites, resuming their journey on the eastern borders of the Red Sea, entered the dreary wilderness of Shur, an endless tract of dry sand spreading out before them. A few days' march northwards might have brought them to the rich and beautiful valleys of Judea; but Moses knew that he must lead his undisciplined hosts into the very heart of the desert, and thus avoid the contact with warlike tribes. Proceeding for three days in a south-easterly direction through a pathless waste, the Israelites found no springs or wells; they were parched with thirst; at last, they arrived at a place, where they were gladdened by the sight of a deep spring; but when they put their lips to the water, they who had so long been accustomed to the delicious and far-famed water of the Nile, found it utterly unpalatable. It was bitter and brackish, and had caused the place to be called Marah, at present Howarah. Fevered with thirst, the unfortunate people murmured against Moses, exclaiming, "What shall we drink!" Moses prayed to the Lord, and in answer to his supplications, the Lord showed him a tree, and bid him cast some of its wood

into the water. By virtue of this tree, the bitterness was changed into sweetness, and the Israelites were saved from the agony of their thirst. Moses seized the opportunity of this miracle to enjoin again upon the Israelites, that they should faithfully remember the statutes and ordinances of the Lord, who so manifestly watched over them: "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and do that which is right in His eyes, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will bring none of those diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians, for I am the Lord that heals thee."

From Marah or Howarah, the Israelites journeyed to Elim in the Wadi Gharendel, two and a half miles south from Marah; there they found twelve wells of water, and at their borders the inviting shade of palm trees. Here they encamped by the water.

Proceeding from Wadi Gharendel a short distance along the sea-shore, and then turning in a south-eastern direction through the Wadi Taybe and Wadi Feiran, the Israelites arrived, after a three days' journey, one month after they had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt, in the beautiful valley of Wadi esh-Sheikh, where the tamarisk trees are so abundant that, in some parts, they form dense forests. That valley is a part of the district of Sin. But the people had exhausted their provisions, and looking helplessly around, they felt that they could not escape starvation. Then, in the bitterness of their hearts, they murmured against Moses, asking, of what avail was their freedom, if they were doomed to perish in the desert? They longed to return to Egypt. "Would to God," they exclaimed, "we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we ate bread to satisfaction; we remember the fish, which we ate in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions,

and the garlick; but you have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." The Lord heard that pitiful cry of despair, and resolving to send His favoured people relief, He said to Moses: "Behold, I shall rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather every day what is sufficient for the day, that I may try them whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall come to pass that on the sixth day, if they will prepare that which they bring in, it shall be double of that which they gather daily."

Moses and Aaron now assured the Hebrews, that they would be protected not only from starvation but from want. Early on the following morning, when the people came forth from their tents, they saw, as the dew vanished, "something small, peeled, as small as hoar frost on the earth." They looked at it in eager astonishment and exclaimed — "What is that!" (*man-hu*). And Moses said to them, "This is the bread which the Lord has given to you for food." Now, this manna was, according to the Scriptural accounts, white like coriander seed or like bdellium; it tasted like cake with honey or like olive-cake; it could be ground in mills, beaten in mortars, or baked in pans, and prepared for cakes. From all these statements it is evident that two sorts of manna are alluded to, different in origin, and in many respects distinct from each other — the manna of the air, and the manna of the trees and shrubs. The former is essentially the sweet juice forced out by the heat from many trees and plants, rising in the air, descending with the dew, and melting in the morning sun; the latter is the harder, thicker, resinous mass, which oozes out from certain trees, especially the tamarisk, either spontaneously or by the puncture of a certain small, unwinged insect (coccus manniparus). Such manna-yielding trees and shrubs are especially abundant in Arabia Petraea and in the neighbourhood of mount Sinai.

Yet the Biblical manna had its own miraculous properties, as is obvious from the following points: "1. The manna of the Israelites falls uninterruptedly through forty years at all seasons, whilst in reality it is only found during two or three months in the year, and in some years not at all. 2. It descends in such quantities that the whole people of Israel is supplied with it, whereas according to authentic reports, even in the most abundant years, the whole peninsula of Sinai yields scarcely 600 to 700 pounds, and in ordinary years not more than the third part of this quantity. 3. It serves as the usual, nutritious, and satisfying food, whilst it is in fact only a medical, relaxing substance, and would, if taken for any length of time, lead to the dissolution of the body, although it may be applied to *sweeten* the meals; nor do the Arabians use it now as an article of food. 4. It falls on the sixth day in double quantities, and on the seventh not at all. 5. It breeds worms, if it is preserved to the following day, whilst that kept from the sixth to the seventh day remains sweet and wholesome. 6. It is to the Israelites perfectly unknown, and causes their astonishment, and an omer full of it is preserved, that future generations might see the miraculous bread of their ancestors; and in the same sense it is called a food which their fathers had never known." *

Moses commanded the people, that each man should gather of the manna just as much as was required for the number of persons composing his household. However, though forbidden to gather of the food on the Sabbath, many went yet out on that day, but they found no manna. Moses rebuked their disobedience severely; and then at last they were induced to keep complete rest on the seventh day.

* *Kalisch*, Commentary on Exodus, ch. XVI.

37. VICTORY OVER THE AMALEKITES.

[Exod. XVII.]

Now the Israelites proceeded again upon their difficult march, and taking, as before, a southerly direction, they arrived at Dophkah, then at Alush, and lastly at Rephidim, which is situated near the group of the Horeb mountains. Here they were visited once more by that fearful trial, want of water; again they felt wearied out by thirst, and all the horrors of impending death made them rise against Moses in anger; but he answered meekly: "Why do you quarrel with me? Wherefore do you try the Lord?" They continued to assail him with more vehement threats: "Wherefore hast thou brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" Then Moses cried to the Lord: "What shall I do to this people? There is but little wanting and they will stone me." The Lord bid Moses take his staff in his hand, and lead the elders of the people to a rock among the mountains of Horeb, where He Himself would be present. Moses did as he was commanded, and as he touched the rock with the staff, streams of water rushed forth. Thus the people were once more saved by a miracle; but was their faith in the Lord's mercy thereby strengthened? Moses called the place Massah and Meribah, "because of the quarreling of the children of Israel, and because they tried the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us or not?"

We now come to a new and distinct phase in the history of the Israelites. They had been freed from slavery: the time had arrived for the men of Israel, to prove themselves warriors. At Rephidim they were attacked by an army of the warlike Amalekites, a nation descending from the Idumaeans, and claiming Esau as their ancestor. This bold desert race lived among the mountains of Arabia Petraea,

and chiefly between Philistia, Egypt, Edom, and the deserts of Mount Sinai. Their assault was directed against the rear of the Hebrew army when it was exhausted and weary. Moses at once appointed Joshua, the son of Nun, a fearless and devoted young hero, general of the Hebrew hosts, and bid him fight with Amalek. The following morning Moses, Aaron, and Hur, ascended one of the hills, and from thence gazed down upon the plain where the two armies were to meet. Moses held his miraculous staff in his hand, and as the Israelites advanced to encounter the foe, he raised it in the air. Possibly that venerable figure standing on the heights with uplifted hands inspired the hearts of the soldiers with hope and courage; for they fought and prevailed. But when the hands of Moses dropped with fatigue, the Israelites retreated and the Amalekites were victorious. All through the long day the fierce combat lasted, until Moses, faint and worn, seated himself upon a stone, while Aaron and Hur supported his hands. As the sun set in the heavens, the victory of the Israelites was decided; they had won their first great battle; they who had but lately been an enslaved nation, had defeated an ancient warrior-race. That extraordinary achievement was by Moses inscribed in a book as a memorial for future ages; for the very remembrance of the Amalekites was to be blotted out from under heaven. And wishing to perpetuate the memory of the scene, Moses built an altar, and called it "the Lord is my banner", for he said, "Because the hand of Amalek was against the throne of God; therefore the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

38. JETHRO.

[Exod. XVIII.]

It will be remembered that Jethro, the priest of Midian, had remained in Arabia, when Moses departed into Egypt on his great mission. His daughter Zipporah with her two sons, Gershom and Eliezer, had returned to the old Arabian home after accompanying the prophet on the first stages of his journey. The story of the wonderful deliverance of the Hebrews and of their journey through the wilderness to the peaks of Horeb, had naturally spread through all surrounding countries, and had thus become known to Jethro, who saw with gratitude and gladness, that his son-in-law Moses was the favoured servant of the Most High. He felt a desire to behold again this chosen messenger of the Lord, and to bring to him, now that the greatest dangers had been surmounted, his wife and children. He soon advanced to the region of Mount Sinai. When Moses was told that his father-in-law had arrived from Midian, he arose and went out from his tent, and welcomed the aged priest with reverence and affection. What a glorious and wondrous tale did Jethro hear from the lips of Moses! More fully and more accurately than he could have learnt by vague reports, he was told of the Lord's mercy and loving-kindness to His enslaved people, of the terrors of the Egyptian plagues, of the miraculous passage through the Red Sea, of the utter destruction of Pharaoh's hosts, and finally of the ever-recurring wonders in the desert, which were strengthening the minds of Israelites in courage and faith, and without which they must long since have perished in their trackless wanderings. Jethro listened to all this with delight and rejoicing; he believed in the God of the Hebrews, and testified his belief by a holocaust and a thank-offering. When Aaron and the elders of the people witnessed this act of faith, they assembled

around Jethro, shared his sacrificial meal, and thereby expressed their spiritual relationship with the Midianite chief.

On the morrow, Moses prepared as usual to judge the people. For it must be recollected that he, their leader and deliverer, was also their ruler, their law-giver, and their judge. All disputes and contentions were decided by him; all commands and all precepts of the Lord were conveyed to the Israelites through his lips. From early dawn till sunset, the people gathered around him. Jethro beholding the scene, saw with true discernment that no one man could undertake so arduous and so exhausting a task. So, when the people had once more returned to their tents, the wise priest of Midian said to Moses: "The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now to my voice; I will give thee counsel and God may be with thee." And judicious and good was the advice given by Jethro. Moses should choose from among the whole nation men of trust and faith, and should make them chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. To these officers should be confided the duty of judging the people. Every small matter they should settle entirely according to their own judgment, while they were to bring every greater and more difficult dispute to Moses. Thus the main weight of the burden, almost crushing for the strength even of Moses, would in a great measure be taken from him. Moses followed the counsel of Jethro, who then departed well satisfied, and returned to his own land.

39. THE REVELATION ON MOUNT SINAI.

[Exod. XXIX. XX.]

The Israelites, leaving Rephidim, entered the desert of Sinai, and encamped in the plains which surround the mountain of that name.

We now approach the crowning point of the history of the Israelites in the desert. In the valley of Horeb they were to be raised from a mere horde of wandering shepherds to a nation ruled over by the Almighty God of Heaven and Earth, to a nation chosen among all others to receive the law of God.

Let us imagine this vast host spreading round the foot of the rugged mountain, awaiting in trembling awe the first accents of the voice of the Lord. That voice was heard at last addressing these solemn words to Moses: "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: You have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now, if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure to Me above all nations, for all the earth is Mine, and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak to the children of Israel." Moses faithfully delivered his great charge; and the people, awed and deeply moved, answered as if with one voice, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." Then they were commanded by Moses, on God's behest, to purify and hallow themselves, and to be ready to receive the Divine revelation on the third day. They carried out these injunctions with alacrity and with piety. Round the mountain on which a mysterious dread seemed to hang, boundaries were placed, which the people were forbidden to pass on penalty of death. And now followed a scene so grand and majestic, so wonderful

and unfathomable, that it can only be told in the words of the Bible. "And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a heavy cloud upon the mountain, and the voice of the trumpet exceedingly strong, so that all who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp towards God, and they placed themselves at the nether part of the mountain. And Mount Sinai was entirely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded louder and louder very much, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And the Lord said to Moses, Go down, warn the people, lest they break through to the Lord to see, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, who come near the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them. And Moses said to the Lord, The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for Thou hast warned us, saying, Set bounds about the mountain, and sanctify it. And the Lord said to him, Go, descend and come up again, thou and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest He break forth upon them. So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them."

And then the Lord proclaimed the Ten Commandments as follows: "1. I am the Lord, thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods besides Me. — 2. Thou shalt not make to thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor be induced to serve them:

for I the Lord thy God am a zealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation, to those who hate Me; and showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me, and keep My commandments. — 3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God for falsehood; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name for falsehood. — 4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, neither thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor thy stranger who is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. — 5. Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God gives thee. — 6. Thou shalt not murder. — 7. Thou shalt not commit adultery. — 8. Thou shalt not steal. — 9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. — 10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's."

These Commandments, a conspicuous landmark in the dim ages of the past, have preserved their force undiminished until our time. They comprise indeed in their brief compass man's chief duties towards God and towards his fellow-creatures. They are calculated to make men pious, reverential, humble, obedient, able to restrain their passions, their desires, their very thoughts. They were revealed to the Hebrews, but they are binding upon all nations of the earth. They can be obeyed and acted upon in every country, by every race. They are written above the Ark of the He-

brew Temple, engraved on the altar of the Christian church, and taught by the Eastern sage.

They may be divided into two groups; the one relates to our duties towards God, the other to those towards our fellow-creatures; the former comprises the four first, the latter the five last commandments, while the fifth refers to our parents, who occupy a position between God and our fellow-men, and in some respects partake of the character of both.

The first commandment enjoins the belief in the existence of God, the Creator, the gracious Bestower of all things. The Israelites had been rescued from their cruel bondage by God, and by Him alone: could they doubt the power of Him to whom they owed their happiness and their freedom? Could they imagine any other Being equal to Him in greatness or wisdom or mercy? They were, therefore, not only to believe in His existence, but also in His unity.

The second commandment is meant as a support and safeguard of the first: God is not to be represented by any image or outward form whatever. This prohibition was indispensable for the Hebrews, who still required the severest training for a pure and spiritual faith, and were encompassed by nations of idolators, who might easily induce them to portray God in images of wood or stone, of gold or silver, in the shape of man, beast, or monster, and to bow down before such an idol. And what was the punishment for the sin of idolatry? Long years of suffering, extending to the third and fourth generation, tainting the lives of unborn children.

The unity and incorporeality of God having thus been declared, His sanctity was enforced in the third commandment. The name of the Lord, so great and awful in import, was not to be profaned by attesting a false oath. Perjury, thus criminally aggravated, would call down on the offender

the most fearful retribution. An oath sworn by the holy name of the Lord, can be justified only by the most perfect sincerity of him who swears it.

The injunctions bearing upon God and His worship reach their culminating point in the fourth commandment—the observance of the Sabbath as a sacred day of rest. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of this precept. The creation of the world in six days and the one day of rest that followed it, were to be types of man's busy six days of labour, relieved by the day consecrated to God. The Sabbath should bring perfect rest to man and beast. Human thoughts, ever turned to worldly things, should on that day soar upwards, and forgetting gain and barter and toil, dwell in holy contemplation on the mercies of God, give utterance to praise and thanksgiving, or learn to search for a nobler and higher welfare than is possible during the din and turmoil of daily life. The Sabbath, sanctified and hallowed, became the first of holy days. It was meant constantly to remind the Hebrews of their relation to God; it was designed as an aid for establishing His sovereignty among them. Therefore, so far from being spent in apathy or indifference, it was to be an ever-recurring feast for heart and mind and soul, a feast gladly welcomed by individuals, households, and the nation, including "the stranger within the gates."

Man owes to his parents a reverence second only to that which is due to God, and hence the place which the fifth commandment occupies in the decalogue. For parents exercise in some measure a Divine right over their children, they are to them the earthly types of their unseen heavenly father. Filial piety is a supreme religious and Divine duty; and its faithful observance is certain to be a blessing to the children. In eastern countries, the outward forms of respect towards parents or elders are peculiarly marked and expressive; the

father has undisputed authority over his family, his wish is law, his word has a holy power. But the fifth commandment is no less scrupulously observed in other climes; and those men and women who have won most honour and fame, have as a rule most vividly remembered and most gratefully acknowledged the care and devotion of a zealous father or of a tender mother.

The sixth commandment, "thou shalt not kill," already enjoined in the time of Cain, and more distinctly still in the age of Noah, was repeated in the decalogue on account of its paramount importance. Man was created in the image of God; his life is a breath from the Divine spirit. The destruction of a man is, therefore, an attack against the majesty of God Himself. The Lord who gave the life can alone take it away. Murder is rebellion against all human and Divine laws.

And as the life of our fellow-men is to be sacred to us, so likewise should be his property; and so in a higher degree, his wife, his dearest and most sacred possession, the companion of his life, the joy of his heart, the mother of his children; and so also, his honour and good name, which might be assailed by the poisonous weapon of the slanderer and the tale-bearer. Therefore, the commandment, "thou shalt not kill," is followed by the prohibitions, "thou shalt not commit adultery," "thou shalt not steal," and "thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

But not in deed and word only, but even in thought man is commanded to abstain from encroaching upon his neighbour's property. His heart and mind are to be no less clean than his hands and lips. He has been told, "thou shalt not covet;" he is to keep away the cankering worms of envy and jealousy, because they are certain to destroy his repose, his happiness, and his virtue. Unless thought,

the root of our words and of our deeds, be pure and healthy, we cannot hope to render our life holy and profitable.

And thus the last of the Ten Commandments may well be considered as the kernel, the very essence of the Law, warm with the breath of Divine truth and love, pure and sublime as the faith it was designed to strengthen and to support.

40. THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT.

[Exod. XXI—XXIV.]

The Israelites who had grown into a nation, recognised God as their king, and not only accepted the laws which He bestowed upon them through His servant Moses, but solemnly pledged themselves to observe and respect them: they concluded, as it were, a Covenant with God. It will be well briefly to consider these laws, both in groups and classes, and then individually in their mutual bearing.

They comprise

I. Ordinances respecting the right of *persons,* of free men and slaves, in all their relations;

II. Provisions in reference to the right of *property*; and

III. *Moral* laws which, however, are intimately connected with the civil organisation of the state.

I. The statutes which treat of the right of persons, and which among other objects, aim at the protection of the slave from the caprice or cruelty of his master, belong to the most important of the whole code. The Hebrews, for centuries bondmen in Egypt, had at last been released to become citizens of a free commonwealth; therefore the first

laws they received related to slavery. The legislator saw indeed fit to allowed or tolerate it among the Israelites, but it was slavery of a very different kind from that now understood by that term, the very sound of which fills us with just and strong aversion. A people who were to live by husbandry and agriculture, required labourers or hirelings to till and work the fields, to cultivate and tend the vineyards, and to gather in the fruits. As a rule, such labourers belonged to foreign nations. They were either prisoners of war, or were purchased in times of peace. Their children, if born in the houses of their masters, became the property of the latter. These strange slaves were protected by mild and generous laws. If fugitives from another country, they were shielded from persecution; they were treated with signal kindness and forbearance; they shared the blessed rest of the Sabbath-day; they were freely admitted to the festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, and by undergoing certain rites, even to the paschal lamb. But it might happen that Hebrews also fell into slavery, especially if poverty compelled them to sell themselves. But in such cases, their dependence was not to be permanent; it was by the law restricted to six years. In the seventh year, the servants had not only the right, but the duty to return to freedom. They were, in reality, hirelings or labourers for a certain limited time, during which they were even allowed to work for their own benefit and thus acquire means of redeeming themselves before the lapse of the six years. Of course, the *Hebrew* slave participated in all the religious privileges of his master: he ate of the paschal lamb at the Passover meal; he worshipped the Lord at the Feast of Weeks; and he joined in the hymns of praise which resounded on the Feast of Tabernacles. He knew that, after his six years of servitude, he would go out free for nothing—not poor and empty-handed, but with flocks and herds, and

corn and wine. His master was to dismiss him with a part of the blessings he had helped to store up for him, in remembrance of the first and great release from the Egyptian house of bondage. If the slave had come into the master's house a single man, he should always go out alone; if married, his wife was to leave with him; but if he had taken a wife in his master's house and had children, he should go out alone, while his family were to remain with the master, until they were redeemed. However, it sometimes happened, that the slave was so much attached to his master, or to the wife he had given him, that he preferred remaining with him after his six years of servitude. Now those who thus disdained liberty, man's birthright and glory, were treated with public ignominy; they were brought before the judge, and in token of lasting and degrading slavery, their ear was bored with an awl at the door or its posts, and they were thus branded as serfs for life. The provisions with respect to maid-servants were, on the whole, identical with those regarding men-servants. If a maid-servant became the wife of her master or her master's son, she remained for ever in his house, enjoying all the privileges of a wife, her children being in the same position as those of a free Hebrew woman. But should she not receive her just rights, she was free to go out at once without waiting for the seventh year. While slavery, as is manifest from all these enactments, was practised in a merciful and humane manner among the Hebrews, it was hard and barbarous amongst other nations; therefore, a Hebrew sold to a stranger was a soul cut off from a privileged community, thrown from enlightenment to idolatry, and lowered from a life of dignity to one of disgrace. Hence kidnapping for the purpose of selling into slavery was threatened with death; the severity of this law was calculated to prevent the tempting and lucrative slave-trade which could easily be carried on

in Palestine, situated in the centre of the Eastern commerce and bounded by the Mediterranean.

No less judicious are the laws of murder. "He that smites a man so that he dies, he shall surely be put to death." Just and prompt retaliation was to fall on the murderer's head. This was the inexorable rule whenever the murder had been perpetrated intentionally and deliberately, or with "malice prepense"; the criminal was to be taken even from the altar to die. But blood might be shed unintentionally and unawares, that is, manslaughter or homicide merely might be committed. Now, a general Eastern custom imposes upon the nearest relative of a murdered person the duty of avenging the murder, and he is therefore called "the avenger of blood" (גֹּאֵל הַדָּם). In order to prevent unjust bloodshed in cases of manslaughter, the Hebrew law provided cities of refuge to which the undesigning homicide might escape. After the first settlement of the Israelites in Canaan, three such cities were appointed; and as their territory increased, the number was doubled — Golan, Ramoth, and Bezer in the east of the Jordan, and Kadesh, Shechem, and Hebron in the west; they were so chosen that one of them might be within easy reach, in whatever part of the land the homicide had taken place. The fugitive was received at the gates by the elders and judges, who heard his case and decided whether he was a wilful murderer or an unwilling and unfortunate man-slayer. If his crime was established, he was at once given over to the avenging Goel; if the case was doubtful, he was sent back to the town where the deed had been committed to be there tried before the competent tribunals; but if his innocence was unmistakeable, he was received into the shelter and safety of the city of refuge. Here he remained until the death of the High-priest, when he was allowed to return to his native town without fear of the Goel. The advent of a new High-priest

was aptly chosen as a time of release; for in a theocratical state it marked a decisive epoch in the life of the nation; and the new spiritual chief fitly restored to their old privileges those who had been deprived of them without guilt on their part. The institution of the cities of refuge as ordained in the Pentateuch, was extremely beneficial in shielding the innocent, in preventing unnecessary bloodshed, and in restraining the fierce ardour of the avenging relatives, which often blindly exterminated whole families and tribes.

The law of Moses, so stringent in cases of murder, was equally careful in protecting the citizens from assault or bodily injury. If a person struck, in a quarrel, a free Israelite or a stranger, and thereby threw him temporarily on a sickbed, without inflicting upon him any serious injury, he had to pay him a double fine, for the loss of time, and for the expenses of the cure. — "If a man smote his man- or his maidservant with a rod and he died under his hand, it was surely to be avenged." Thus the right of the slave was established, and his immediate death, even if not intended by his master, was visited by adequate punishment; though if he survived the ill-treatment for a day or two, his master was not held responsible. — Not only man's life, but his person generally was protected by the enactment of strict and literal retribution. The violent and unprincipled man must have trembled and stayed his hand at the words: "Thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." In most cases, however, this physical retaliation was changed into a fine or penalty paid to the sufferer, and agreed upon by the two persons concerned; and the law was, as a rule, enforced only when the violence had been inflicted intentionally and maliciously. — If the master chastised his slave so as to deprive him of the use of any member, be this even a

tooth, he was compelled to release him immediately without ransom.

Man's life might be endangered not only by the hand of man, but by an infuriated beast, and the law wisely and humanely interposed to prevent this misfortune as much as feasible. If for instance, "an ox gores a man or a woman, that they die, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. But if the ox were wont to push in time past, and it has been testified to his owner, and he has not kept him in, so that he killed a man or a woman: the ox shall be stoned, and his owner shall be put to death." Yet as death occasioned by such accident could not be punished as severely as an intentional and deceitful murder, redemption by money was permitted, on a just and liberal valuation made by the judges. If a slave were thus killed by an ox, his master was indemnified for the loss by thirty shekels, the average price of a slave, while the animal was of course killed.

II. From the right of persons so strenuously and rigidly guarded by the code of Moses, we turn to the second class of laws, those which concern the right of property.

Provisions of this nature were most needful, nay indispensable in a young community, which but gradually and slowly changed from nomadic to agricultural pursuits, and whose wealth consisted not so much in gold and silver as in the more uncertain and cumbrous possession of flocks and herds. Among such a people it was particularly necessary to enforce the sacredness of property. Therefore, the first law recorded in that respect relates to the protection of animals. A cistern or pit left without covering, whether this be a stone or boards and planks, is extremely dangerous to the security of beasts. Therefore it was enacted:

"If a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit, and does not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein; the owner of the pit shall pay for it, and give money to their owner, and the dead beast shall be his." — Again, if one man's ox killed another's, then the live ox was sold, and the money divided between the two proprietors: but if the owner had before been warned of the violent disposition of his ox, and had not guarded and watched him, then he had to pay the full money for the damage his animal had occasioned.

Next follow the laws bearing on the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." If we picture to ourselves a patriarch whose tent covered but a small space of ground, but whose possessions stretched out boundlessly around him, thousands of animals — camels, oxen, asses, sheep, and goats — grazing in the pastures and on the plains without guard or protection, we can readily understand, how dangerous theft would have been, had it not been repressed by a severe law. Therefore, it was enforced that "if a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it, or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for one ox and four sheep for one sheep."

If a thief broke into a house at night, when no help could be procured, and if he was killed by the master, it was not regarded as murder, but as legitimate self-defence. But if the thief broke in during the broad daylight, the master was not permitted to take his life, as he was then free to call in the aid of the authorities against the lawless burglar. The thief was compelled to restore the theft doubly, if it was found untouched in his hands; if he was unable to do so, he was sold into servitude to a Hebrew master, till he was able to pay the fine. But if he had, before detection, applied the theft, wholly or partially, to his own uses — for instance, if he had killed or sold stolen cattle — the punishment was more rigorous; he was obliged to

pay five oxen for one ox, and four sheep for one, the justice and expediency of which enactments are self-evident.

If a man allowed his cattle to graze in the fields or vineyards of another, and so injured his harvest of wheat and fruit, the offender was required to pay for the loss he had occasioned from "the best of the field and the best of his vineyard."

In the East, it is the custom at the end of the summer months, before the crop is sown for the ensuing year, to burn the thorns and weeds left in the fields. But owing to the dryness of the soil, a conflagration spreading over contiguous fields and meadows, may and often does ensue. For the damage thus caused, full restitution was to be made by him whose neglect occasioned it.

All property committed to the safe-keeping of others, was to be regarded as sacred, and he who consented to take the charge, was answerable for loss or injury. However, "in this respect the distinction was established and adhered to, that if inanimate objects were, by cunning or violence, wrested from the depositary, he was not bound to make restitution to the proprietor; but if animals, as oxen, asses, or sheep, were entrusted to his care, he was responsible for theft, but not for such accidents as the death of an animal, or its abduction by robbers or laceration by a wild beast. But if it is found that he had in any way intended to act fraudulently to the proprietor, he was compelled to restore to him the twofold value of the deposit. All these disputes were decided by the competent judge, by means of adjuration."

III. If all the laws concerning the rights of person and of property bear the stamp of wisdom and judiciousness, those relating to the moral intercourse between man and man, to which we now proceed, breathe the purest

spirit of humanity, and may well be termed sublime. Full of moderation and of forethought, they are an admirable study for the legislators of all ages, and a model for all nations. They are characterized by that feeling of love and tender charity which everywhere pervades the Mosaic code; they breathe the true and noble benevolence which the Hebrew was taught to practise towards the poor, the helpless, and the stranger.

Reverence to old age was repeatedly enjoined: "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord!"

Parents, judges, kings, and priests were considered as God's representatives on earth. The crime of parricide, too enormous to be realized, and therefore not even mentioned in some ancient legislations, was to be punished by instant death; nay more, it was enacted, "He who curses his father or his mother shall also die."

Charity and mercy, or love of justice and truth, suggested laws like these: "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord."

"You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour."

"You shall do no unrighteousness in mete-yard, in weight, or in measure."

"Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin shall you have."

"Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small: but thou shalt have a just and perfect weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have, that thy day may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God gives thee."

"Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among the people, neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the Lord."

Descending deeper to the very source of human actions, the lawgiver commanded:

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."

"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Reverence due to God and the inviolable sanctity of His name, though proclaimed before in the third commandment, were again enforced with the utmost rigour: "He that blasphemes the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him; as well the stranger as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemes the name of the Lord, shall be put to death."

But Moses passed beyond the limits of civil and penal laws, to touch on duties which lie entirely in the sphere of feeling and humanity. The stranger, the widow, and the fatherless were sacred before the Lord: "If thou afflict them in any way, and if they cry to Me, I will surely hear their cry, and My wrath shall be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows, and your children orphans." The helpless, the poor, the destitute stood under God's special protection: every Hebrew was called upon to afford them help and to show them kindliness. A stranger had the Israelite been in the land of Egypt; he had felt the bitterness of bondage; he could, therefore, sympathise with the stranger in his own land. The duty of hospitality, so readily observed in the East, was by the Israelites raised into a sacred obligation. Their tent was

open to the wanderer; a feast was prepared to welcome him; and his host would usually accompany him on his way for some distance when he rose to depart. The laws for the poor, which of course included the widow and the orphan, were most precise. In mentioning the poor, we must not imagine to ourselves a considerable portion of the population reduced to beggary and squalid poverty, such as we see alas! now in every country of the world. Among the small Hebrew community, the landed property was almost equally divided, and there were none actually very wealthy and none ought properly to have been in want. But yet, from various reasons, there were instances when an Israelite fell hopelessly from the happy and enviable condition of independence, and this occurred so constantly that the words of Moses were not misapplied: "The needy shall not cease from amidst the land." In such cases, the benevolence of his brethren was instantly put to a test. There could be no fearful and enduring suffering where the laws of humanity were so forcibly and intelligibly enjoined. For Moses ordained that

1. The spontaneous produce of the fields, the orchards, and the vineyards, in every seventh year, when they were not cultivated, belonged to the poor as well as to the proprietors.

2. In every harvest, the borders of the fields were to be preserved and left to the poor and the stranger: according to tradition these borders must at least be the sixtieth part of the field; and the law applied to all sorts of corn and legumes, the vine and olive, the nut- and date-trees. No poor man could be refused, and none was to be favoured in this privilege.

3. The proprietor was not allowed to glean the vineyard after the gathering, nor take up the grapes which fell off; all this belonged likewise to the poor and the stranger.

4. "When thou cuttest down thy harvest in thy field, and hast forgotten a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee and all the works of thy hands."

5. "When thou beatest thy olive-tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow."

6. "At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thy increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: and the Levite, because he has no part nor inheritance with thee, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, who are within thy gates, shall come and shall eat and be satisfied, that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the works of thy hand which thou doest."

When a man borrowed money in times of need, the wealthier creditor was not permitted to demand interest for the loan, lest the poor man be still more hopelessly entangled in want and led into ruin. And if a garment were given as a pledge for the money, it was to be returned before sunset, for, says the merciful lawgiver, "that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? And it shall come to pass that when he cries to Me, I will hear him, for I am compassionate."

The ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour," was developed with particular care. No unfounded report was countenanced; perjury was forbidden as a heinous crime. In cases of hidden or insufficiently proved offences, which could, for this reason, not be made amenable to the law, the honest witness was to raise his voice fearlessly for the assertion of truth. Judicial impartiality was in all cases to be rigidly maintained:

even the poor were not to be sheltered or favoured by a false and misplaced compassion.

In some instances, the very laws of property were converted into precepts of morality. The property of man was to be sacred in the eyes of his neighbour, and no private enmity was to interfere with the rigid observance of this principle. Thus, in the words of the Bible: "If thou meet thy enemy's ox or his ass erring about, thou shalt surely bring it back to him." — "If thou seest the ass of him that hates thee, lying under its burden, forbear to leave it to it: thou shalt leave it only with him."

We now arrive at one of the most characteristic and important parts of the Mosaic legislation — that which refers to the Sabbath year and the year of jubilee. The Sabbath itself, specially enjoined in the fourth commandment, was repeated and enlarged upon in the later laws of Sinai; it was, besides, made the foundation of the peculiar and important civil arrangement that every seventh year was to be instituted as the "Sabbath year" or "year of release." The Israelites were essentially an agricultural people; all their wealth was in the soil which they tilled, and in the flocks and herds that grazed on their pastures. For six years, the land was theirs for sowing and planting, for reaping and gathering in; but in the seventh year, which, as it were, was the Lord's and not the husbandman's, the fields, the vineyards, and the olive groves were to rest; the produce which they brought forth spontaneously, belonged for common use to the proprietors, the servants, the poor, the stranger, and the beasts. No debts were exacted in the seventh year except from strangers, and all pledges were to be redeemed. In fact, it was the year of goodwill, of kindness, of charity, when men recognized that the earth with all its wealth was the Lord's, and that they were only sojourners and strangers upon it. Like the Sabbath,

it tended, to purify the mind from selfishness and worldliness, to instil into the heart a feeling of love and benevolence and to ennoble the faith in God by practical virtue.

The beautiful ideas implied in these institutions were still further carried out, in a manner that entered even more deeply into the national life of the people. As the years rolled on, and when the Sabbath year had been repeated seven times, that is to say after every forty nine years, the "year of jubilee" was to be held. The fiftieth year, devoted to rejoicing, and ushered in by the solemn blast of the trumpet, proclaimed universal liberty. All persons were restored to their original condition in which they were placed by the Divine Law and by the first distribution of the land. Every slave was freed, every pledge restored, every debt cancelled. Every hired servant and poor bondman might return to his own family and to the possessions of his fathers. In that year also the land was the Lord's, and men might neither sow nor reap.

The Mosaic legislation constantly brought the Israelites and the land they inhabited into direct relation with their Creator; and this principle appears nowhere more strikingly than in the Hebrew festivals.

Most of them celebrated special or historical events, and were designed to recall the love and mercies of a bountiful God. But they were besides connected with the chief epochs of the agricultural year. They were solemnized in the spring-time, summer, and autumn, at the beginning and end of the corn-harvest, and at the conclusion of the ingathering of fruit. On each of these festivals the Israelites were called upon to attend at the Temple of Jerusalem. There the fruits of the earth were laid before the altar, and the pious and grateful husbandman poured forth his song of thanksgiving and of praise to the Almighty who had blessed the labour of his hands. But the voice of the past

was heard again in the voice of the present, and to the gratitude for the ever recurring mercies of God was added the tale of the redemption from Egyptian bondage and other trials.

The first of these festivals was the feast of Passover, solemnized for seven days from the fifteenth day in the month of Nisan, the first month in the year, when the land of Palestine is bright with the ripening corn. It was to be kept for seven days in commemoration of the release from Egypt. The Israelites were, during that period, to eat unleavened bread only, as their forefathers had been compelled to do when they accomplished their hasty flight. It was the anniversary of their nation's birth, of the last faint clank of their chains, of their first note of freedom. And in order to impress the importance of this festival, it was decreed that, if any member of the chosen nation were debarred, whether on account of a journey or sickness or mourning, from celebrating it at the appointed time, he was to keep it on the fifteenth day of the following or second month, and this was termed "the second Passover." It marked the commencement of the summer crops. Ripened by the hot eastern sun, the corn, in the month of April, is ready to be gathered in; therefore the first sheaf of ripe barley was presented by the priest on the second day of Passover as a firstfruit-offering. The paschal lamb and other ceremonials connected with the festival have been mentioned before (p. 137).

Seven full weeks after the feast of Passover, the second great festival was celebrated, the feast of Pentecost, which was in truth the festival of the harvest. It fell in the loveliest season of the year, when, from the shores of the Mediterranean to the heights of Judea and northward to the fertile plains of Samaria and Galilee, the land of Palestine smiles fair in summer beauty. A deep-blue and cloudless

sky arches over the purple vineyards and the dark olive groves; the husbandman, who had gathered in his harvest of wheat, repaired to the Temple of God to praise and glorify Him for His bounty. It was a great and solemn rejoicing, shared by the entire nation, the servant, the stranger, the bondman; it was the season for feasting, for joyful assemblies, for public games and dances.

Tradition, without depriving this holiday of its beautiful and intimate connection with nature, adds to it a spiritual significance, and considers it as a commemoration of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai; and at present, when offerings at the Temple are impossible, and the Jews are scattered through all climes, the latter meaning is almost exclusively associated with the days of Pentecost.

The feast of Tabernacles was appointed for seven days from the fifteenth day of the seventh month, later called Tishri. It marked the end of the autumn, when the rainy season which corresponds with our winter, was about to commence. It was the harvest of the vine and the olive, the ingathering of the fruit so needful and delicious. It was indeed a fitting moment for another, perhaps the greatest, festival of gratitude to the Lord. But like the two other chief festivals, it had a twofold meaning; besides its agricultural character, it was intended to keep alive the memory of the Divine protection so mercifully bestowed upon the Israelites during their forty years' wanderings in the desert. And in order to bring that remembrance constantly and vividly before the people, they were commanded during the seven days of the festival to live in Tabernacles, as their fathers had done in the wilderness. They were to build for themselves booths, and to adorn them with branches of the palm-tree, twigs of the myrtle, willows of the brook, and the fragrant citron, thus filling their temporary habitations with the types of the varied productions

of the soil. There, in the still eastern night, they might catch, through the slight, leaf-covered roof, a glimpse of the starlit sky; and there, surrounded by the obvious proofs of God's bounty, they were reminded of that unchanging goodness which had guided their fathers through the desert, and had given to them that beautiful land upon which His eye watches "from the beginning of the year to the end of the year."

Besides these three festivals, two others of a purely spiritual character were instituted. As those just described were eminently feasts of rejoicing, so were the others festivals of serious contemplation and of self-affliction. On the first day of the seventh month, "a day of memorial" or "a day of blowing the trumpet" was commanded to be kept. Its character is not described in the Bible beyond being designated as a day on which no work was to be done, and solemn sacrifices were to be offered to God. But Jewish tradition, working out every allusion of Scripture, considers it as the commencement of the religious year, and moreover, as the beginning of a season of penitence, which culminates in the "Day of Atonement" solemnized on the tenth of the same month. On this, the most sacred day of the year, a complete fast is to be kept from even till even: body and soul are alike to be afflicted for the sins and transgressions of the past; forgiveness is to be prayed for in all humbleness; the soul is to be restored to purity, and the heart to repose and peace. In this sense the Day of Atonement is still observed by the Jewish people, who justly regard it as the most spiritual, the sublimest of their festivals.

At the three great agricultural festivals, every Israelite was commanded to worship in the common Temple of Jerusalem, and to present his offering to the Lord. Thus three times in the year, caravans and multitudes of Isra-

elites from every part of the land, might be seen journeying towards Jerusalem. Many, if not called away by urgent duties, would remain in the holy city during the weeks that intervened between Passover and Pentecost. As the precincts of Jerusalem could not contain this mighty host of pilgrims, tents were pitched all round the town, forming one great camp, and there a scene of indescribable animation and eager interest presented itself. The flocks and herds grazed round the tents, and the camels that had come laden with provisions, dotted the adjoining fields and plains.

The code of laws concluded with an earnest exhortation to the children of Israel, to listen to and obey the voice of God's servant Moses: "Behold, I send a messenger before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, obey his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in him."

When Moses proclaimed the words of the Lord to the people, they all promised obedience with one voice. This covenant between God and Israel was ratified in a peculiar manner. "Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent the young men of the children of Israel, and they offered burnt-offerings and sacrificed thank-offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the Book of the Covenant, and read before the ear of the people: and they said, All that the Lord has said shall we do and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you on the condition of all these words."

After the sacrifice, Moses and Aaron, accompanied by

Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, went up to Mount Sinai, where the glory of the Lord appeared to them. "And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under His feet like a work of pellucid sapphire, and like heaven itself in its clearness." But Moses alone ascended to the top of the mountain which was enveloped by a thick cloud. On the seventh day, God called Moses, who then passed within the cloud and remained there, withdrawn from the sight of the people, for forty days and forty nights.

41. THE TABERNACLE.

[Exod. XXV–XXVII. XXX.]

When the chief moral and civil laws had been given to the Israelites, and been accepted by them with cheerful readiness, it was important that the observance of their faith should be secured and strengthened by outward symbols and a regular form of worship. It was above all deemed desirable to establish some visible sign of God's presence among the people. The idea that the spirit of the Almighty dwelt among them, and led them in their wanderings, was soul-stirring and encouraging; it intensified religious belief; it cheered the desponding, and roused the indolent. To keep this thought before their minds with the utmost vividness, a permanent dwelling-place for the glory of the Lord or a "Tabernacle" was to be constructed. Hallowed by the sanction of God, it was to be like a banner around which they should rally when menaced by outward enemies; it was to be an unfailing safeguard against their own fatal weakness, when tempted to lean towards idolatry.

During the forty days and nights which Moses spent on Mount Sinai, he was instructed by the Lord in all the details of the Tabernacle and its service; and when he

returned to the Israelites, he proceeded at once to carry out the precepts he had received.

Let us picture to ourselves the holy edifice as it stood when completed.

The Tabernacle consisted of three distinct parts — the Holy of Holies, the Sanctuary or Holy, and the Court. The two former were the Tabernacle in the stricter sense. This was thirty cubits long, ten cubits broad, and ten cubits high, and formed therefore an oblong square, the longer sides being those extending from east to west. It was made of boards of acacia wood plated with gold, each of which was ten cubits long and one cubit and a-half broad. The boards, in order to be fixed in the ground, were each provided at the end with two tenons, which fitted in sockets of silver. But only the northern, southern, and western sides were in this manner framed of wood. At the eastern side was the entrance, which was covered with a curtain of blue, red, and crimson, and twined byssus. This curtain, which formed a square of ten cubits, was supported by five pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold, fixed by means of golden hooks and five sockets of brass. The fifth side or the ceiling consisted of a costly covering composed of carpets or curtains of twined byssus, and blue, red, and crimson, with figures of the Cherubim interwoven; over it was a covering of goats' hair made of eleven curtains; and over this a third covering of rams' skins died red, and a fourth of badgers' skins, both of which were not only spread over the ceiling, but hung down at the sides without as a protection against the injurious influences of the weather.

The structure just described was divided into two parts of a different degree of sanctity by a splendid curtain adorned with the images of the Cherubim, and suspended immediately under the loops and hooks of the first covering, so that the western part was ten, and the eastern twenty

cubits long. The former was the Holy of Holies, the latter the Sanctuary or the Holy. This curtain also hung, like that of the whole Tabernacle, on pillars of gilt acacia wood, but they were only four in number, fixed by means of hooks of gold and four sockets of silver. Golden nails were here likewise applied to fasten the curtain to the pillars.

Around the Tabernacle was a Court, one hundred cubits long, fifty cubits broad, and formed by pillars and curtains five cubits high: the pillars were of wood not plated with metal, twenty on each of the longer sides, ten on the shorter ones; the curtains were of fine twined linen. The entrance into the Court was from the east, "so that when the sun arose, it might send its first rays upon it." Exactly in the middle was a door, twenty cubits wide, overhung with a curtain of the same materials and workmanship as that before the Sanctuary. The Court had no covering above, but was exposed to the air; and from without it was, like the Tabernacle, fastened in the ground by pins and tent-ropes.

Within the Court stood two holy implements.

1. *The Altar of Burnt-Offering.* It was formed of hollow boards of acacia wood covered with brass, and filled with earth. It was three cubits high, and five long and broad. At the four corners were four horns of the same wood overlaid with brass. It had a border, and under it a grate or network of brass, probably in order to receive whatever might fall from the altar, especially wood and ashes. To the altar belonged various vessels of brass, as pots and basins, forks and fire-shovels.

2. *The Laver,* in which the priests washed their hands and feet before they commenced their sacred duties. It stood between the brazen altar and the curtain of the Sanctuary. It was made of brass, chiefly "of the looking glasses of the women who served at the door of the Tabernacle."

The chief implements of the Holy or Sanctuary were three in number — the Shew-bread Table, the Candlestick, and the Altar of Incense.

1. The *Table* was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold one cubit and a half high, two cubits long, and one broad. The top was encircled at the border with a golden wreath or crown. Four golden rings were fastened in the four corners of the feet, probably immediately under the border or enclosure; and two staves of acacia wood overlaid with gold, were put into the rings for the transport of the Table in the journeys of the Hebrews. — Twelve unleavened cakes, in two equal rows, were placed upon this Table as a permanent cereal offering for the twelve tribes of Israel. On each row pure frankincense was burnt, as a symbol that the shew-bread was offered to God and sacred to Him. Every sabbath they were taken from the Table and eaten by the priests, but at once replaced by new ones. The vessels belonging to the Table were all of gold — the dishes for the cakes, the bowls for the frankincense, the cans and cups for the wine used at the libations which were most probably connected with the burning of the incense.

2. Opposite the Table, and occupying the southern or southwestern part of the Sanctuary stood the *Candlestick.* It was made of pure gold, and consisted of seven arms; for it rested on a base from which rose a shaft that divided itself into three branches on each side. On each of the arms burnt a lamp filled with pure olive oil, six from evening till morning, but one from evening to evening. The arms themselves were ornamented with calyxes of almond flowers, pomegranates, and blossoms of the lily or some other flower. To the candelabrum belonged as necessary utensils golden snuffers and fire-shovels.

3. Between the Shew-bread Table and the Candlestick,

and before the curtain that separated the Sanctuary from the Holy of Holies, stood the *Altar of Incense*. It was square, made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, ornamented round the top with a golden wreath, and furnished with horns, on which the High-priest put the blood of atonement. On this altar no sacrifice of any kind was offered, but the priest burnt every morning and every evening a peculiar frankincense most carefully prepared.

When the High-priest passed from the Sanctuary, through the costly curtain, into the sacred and mysterious Holy of Holies, he found there the *Ark* or the *Ark of the Covenant* or *of the Testimony*. It consisted of three distinct parts.

1. The *Ark* itself, having the form of an oblong chest, was made of acacia wood plated with fine gold from within and from without. Round it was a border encircling it like a crown. It stood on four feet, each of which was provided with a ring; and through these rings were passed the two gilded staves of acacia wood, by which the Ark was carried. Into it were placed the two tablets of the Law, and nothing more; but before it an urn filled with manna, and the blooming staff of Aaron (see infra).

2. On the Ark was the *Mercy-Seat*, formed of pure gold and thus made distinct from the Ark. It was one of the most important parts of the Tabernacle, and the place where the blood of atonement was sprinkled on the most solemn occasions of the year.

3. On the Mercy-seat and forming one whole with it, were two golden figures of the *Cherubim*, with their wings expanded, and their faces turned to each other and looking down upon the Mercy-seat. All that we can infer with respect to their shape is, that they were probably not very large, winged, and of the human form. They were intended to serve as symbols for the Presence of God which filled

the Holy of Holies; and the High-priest, as he entered the sanctified spot with awe and reverence, glanced from the type of the one infinite heavenly Being to the Ark wherein lay the words of the Lord as He had revealed them to His prophet Moses.

The glory of God was alone to illumine the Holy of Holies; neither the rays of the sun, nor the light of lamps was allowed to penetrate into the mysterious dwelling-place of the Lord.

42. THE GARMENTS OF THE PRIESTS.

[Exod. XXXVIII. XXXIX.]

After God had described to Moses the holy edifice and all its parts, He gave him His directions concerning the priests who were to perform the sacred offices in that Sanctuary. Israel had been chosen as a holy people from among all other nations; now the Levites were chosen from among the other tribes as specially consecrated; they constituted more particularly "the kingdom of priests." But among the Levites, the family of Aaron was singled out to do God's service; Aaron himself was appointed the first High-priest, the spiritual king, the man who interceded between God and His people.

Now, the very garments were to denote the sacredness and reveal the spiritual mission of the priests. They were symbolical, and therefore minutely prescribed.

The vestments of the common priests consisted of the tesselated tunic, the drawers, the girdle, and the turban.

1. The *Tunic* was a long close robe without folds, of white linen, with sleeves, covering the whole body down to the feet. It was woven in an entire piece, and formed one whole, with an aperture for the neck. It is described as *tesselated*, because the forms of squares were interwoven

in it. The white colour was a symbol of purity, the fine linen pointed to sanctity, the interwoven squares were understood as an emblem of completeness.

2. Over this tunic was tied the *Girdle*, made of fine linen with blue, red, and crimson, and embroidered with figures like the curtain of the Court and the Sanctuary. It was very long and broad, and was tied several times round the waist, while the end hung loosely down to the ancles; but whenever the priest was engaged in active ministrations, he threw the end over his left shoulder, in order not to be impeded in his work. Although the girdle formed an indispensable part of the oriental dress, it is more especially the symbol of readiness, of office, and of appointment to fixed duties; and it had this meaning in the priestly attire.

3. The *drawers* are thus described by Josephus: "They are a girdle composed of fine twined linen; the feet are inserted into them in the manner of breeches; but above half of them is cut off, and they end at the thighs, and are there tied fast."

4. The head of the common priest was covered by the *Turban;* it was made of thick folds of linen, doubled round many times and firmly sown together; and it was fastened to the head by means of ribbons to prevent its falling off. This turban, which was never to be removed, was to remind the priest that the head, the seat of reflection and wisdom, was especially consecrated, that he should hallow his thoughts, and direct all his ideas to purity and truth.

The High-priests shared these garments with the common priests; but they had, besides, distinguishing vestments and ornaments which proclaimed their office to be one of higher importance and holiness.

1. The High-priest wore on his mitre a plate of gold, sometimes called a crown, reaching probably only from one

temple to the other, and fastened to the turban by a thin ribbon. On this glittering ornament the significant words "Holiness to the Lord" (קדש ליהוה) were inscribed. They declared that the wearer was entirely devoted to the service of God, and that his mission was to elevate and sanctify the chosen people. The plate was, like the diadem, the emblem of royalty, for the High-priest was the anointed chief of the kingdom of priests, the spiritual representative of the Israelites, the visible connecting link between God and His people.

2. But the most characteristic garment of the High-priest was the *Ephod*, which he wore above the tunic. It was made of the finest texture, "the work of the skilful weaver," not only of blue and red, crimson and fine twined linen, but also of gold threads, which were again to symbolise the sovereignty of the High-priest as spiritual king; it was without sleeves, and consisted of two parts called "shoulder-pieces," one of which covered the back, the other the breast and the upper part of the body. Where they were united on the shoulders, two onyx-stones set in gold were fixed. On these onyx-stones "the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were to be engraved, six on each stone, according to their age; and the High-priest was to wear these stones as 'stones of memorial' for the children of Israel when he stood before God. The significance of this arrangement is self-evident. The High-priest represented Israel before God; the stones were, therefore, for the people, who saw them and their names engraved on them, a memorial that the High-priest officiated in their name; that he interceded in their favour; that he strove to expiate their sins and to reconcile them with their Creator, from whom they had swerved by their transgressions. The stones with the names on them were, therefore, for every individual an earnest admonition to render himself, by repentance and atonement,

worthy of that reconciliation; for the prayers and the sacrifices of the High-priest are efficacious only in so far as the people itself shows a craving after the restoration of that blissful harmony."* The ephod had a band or girdle, woven of the same costly texture, and forming with it one entire piece.

3. Above the ephod and attached to it by two chains twisted of gold thread, and resting chiefly upon the heart, was the *Breast-plate of Decision.* This remarkable portion of the pontifical vestments was woven of the same fine texture and the same costly materials as the ephod, with which it was meant to stand in close connection. On the breast-plate sparkled twelve precious stones in four equal rows; on each stone the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel was engraven. "Nothing represents both the origin and destiny of man in a more striking and more beautiful manner than precious stones carefully worked out. Like the jewel, man is a child of the earth; but as this earthly frame encloses the breath of God and an eternal soul, it is a precious treasure in the eyes of God; He values man as bearing His image and His indelible impress. But it is the aim of man to train himself from a creature of the earth into a denizen of heaven, to transform the gloom and heaviness inherent in matter into the aerial brightness which is the essence of the spirits; and the smiling splendour of the precious stones, which are, like him, taken from the same dark womb of the common mother, symbolize to him that internal regeneration, that ascending from earth to heaven, from impurity to purity, from worldliness to sanctity, which is the innermost tendency of the Mosaic dispensation. But, further, the jewels are, among all ancient nations, regarded as the foci of light, as the eyes of the earth; they are the emblems of the stars, which they

* See *Kalisch*, on Exod. XXVIII.

rival in splendour; their brilliancy recalls the brightness of heaven; and if the names of the tribes were engraven on twelve stones, the hosts of Israel were reminded to strive after the *light* and the *purity* of the heavenly hosts." (*Ibid.*)

The twelve jewels, as far as it is at present possible to ascertain the meaning of the Hebrew terms, were as follows:

1. Carnelian, topaz, and smaragd.
2. Carbuncle, sapphire, and emerald.
3. Ligure, agate, and amethyst.
4. Chrysolite, onyx, and jasper.

These stones were, at the same time, used for a very peculiar purpose. By their means, the High-priest was, in critical and difficult emergencies, enabled to discover and reveal the will of God; hence the breast-plate was designated "the breast-plate of decision;" and the twelve stones are described by the remarkable terms *Urim* and *Thummim*, or Light and Truth. As, therefore, the Urim and Thummim are identical with the twelve gems, they must bear some reference to the symbolical meaning of the latter; and this is, as has been observed above, purification from the state of sin and worldliness. "The brilliancy of the precious stone is a type of the shining splendour of the purified soul and of the celestial orbs. Now the *Urim* and *Thummim* are nothing else than this 'perfect light or brilliancy;' they represent the absolute banishment of terrestrial selfishness, the highest possible degree of self-denial. Therefore, Aaron had to wear them on the heart, the source of all desires, of all mundane propensities, on the heart which is 'deceitful above all things and wicked, which no man knows and which God alone searches.' If the heart of the High-priest was purified, if he pursued no other interests than the welfare of his people, then only was he worthy and capable of becoming the medium through

which Israel received advice and guidance in times of trouble and uncertainty. And hence the much-disputed question, in what manner the answers of the Urim and Thummim were given, is easily to be decided. The High-priest was, by the sight of the gems, powerfully impressed with the grandeur of his mission; his mind gave itself up entirely to the duties of his office; all earthly thoughts vanished before him; he was raised to a prophetic vision, and in this state of sanctity God deigned to reveal to him His will and the destinies of His people; and both the High-priest and the people were convinced of the truth of such inspirations. But there is this difference between the High-priest and the prophet, that the former has to try to rise up to God by moral exertion, whilst God descends to the latter spontaneously; the one is a servant, the other a messenger; and therefore the office of the High-priest is continuous, while prophets are only inspired in extraordinary times and for special purposes." (*Ibid.*)

4. To complete the magnificent attire of the High-priest, he wore between the ephod and the tunic the *Robe,* which was longer than the ephod and shorter than the tunic. It was of fine blue wool, without sleeves, woven of one piece with an aperture for the neck, round which a strong border was worked for protection from tearing. The blue colour of the garment was a significant symbol of that heavenly virtue, which was to be the constant aim of the High-priest. Yet in order that his principal vestment might not be wanting in those colours which chiefly characterise the Tabernacle and the priestly attire, it ended in a broad hem of pomegranates of blue, red, and crimson. Between these pomegranates small golden bells were inserted. The bells were not merely meant to be an additional ornament, but they served a more important purpose. Their sound, produced when Aaron walked into

the Sanctuary to perform the prescribed service, or when he returned after its completion, was to call the attention of the worshipping Israelites in the Court to the sacredness of his office, and to impress their minds with deep reverence; for without the pious devotion of the people, the intervention of the High-priest before God was of little avail. — Thus magnificently were the High-priest and the priests attired; yet were they to approach the Sanctuary with uncovered feet, that they might constantly be reminded of modesty and humility.

43. THE GOLDEN CALF.

[Exod. XXXII.]

The Israelites had watched Moses from their tents as he disappeared amidst the flames and the smoke of Mount Sinai; they awaited his return with anxiety; but when day after day, week after week passed by, and they were still left without their chief and guide, they despaired of his re-appearance, and came to Aaron and said: "Rise, make us a god who shall go before us; for as to this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." Aaron, weak and well aware of the stubbornness and violence of the people, acceded to their demand. He bid the men and women bring their golden ornaments, which he melted and formed into the shape of a calf, most probably a likeness of the Egyptian Apis. Then the people exclaimed in wild rejoicing: "These are thy gods, o Israel, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt;" and Aaron built an altar before the image and announced: "To-morrow is a feast to the Lord."

The morrow came, and the reckless people brought their peace-offerings and their burnt-offerings, and sacrificed

to the idol. Then followed the usual public feasting with dancing and games.

The Lord, as He communed with His servant Moses on the heights of Sinai, heard the impious sounds rising from the tents, and His wrath was great. He commanded Moses to descend, and to declare that He would utterly annihilate the rebellious people. But Moses prayed to the Lord humbly and fervently: "Lord, why is Thy anger kindled against Thy people, which Thou hast brought from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, To their misfortune He brought them out to slay them in the mountains, and to destroy them from the face of the earth? Turn from the rage of Thy anger, and recall the evil against Thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou hast sworn by Thy own self, and to whom Thou hast said, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land of which I have spoken will I give to your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever." — And the Lord heard the prayer of His pious servant.

Moses then began to go down bearing in his hands the two tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments had been written by the finger of God. Joshua, his devoted follower, awaited him at the foot of the mountain. The sounds of merriment were rising loud in the air, and Joshua, the warrior, exclaimed, "There is a noise of war in the camp." But Moses answered, "It is not the voice of those who cry victory, nor the voice of those who cry defeat; the voice of those who sing do I hear." And as he advanced, he came in full view of the camp. He saw the golden calf raised on high with the offerings burning before it, whilst around it danced and sang the infatuated multitude. The faithful servant of God was filled with horror at the impiety of the people; in his indignation and anger, he dashed the stone

tablets out of his hands, and they were broken at the foot of the mountain. Then he advanced into the midst of the revellers, seized the calf, burned it in fire, and ground it into powder which he scattered in water; and of this water he made the Israelites drink to their own ignominy. He them turned upbraidingly to Aaron, demanding, "What has this people done to thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon it?" Aaron felt his miserable weakness, and replied in a confused manner, repeating the request of the children of Israel and his own guilty assent: "they gave me their gold; then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." Moses now went to the gate of the camp, and proclaimed in a loud voice: "He who is for the Lord may come to me;" whereupon the men of the tribe of Levi assembled round him as his faithful followers. Most terrible was their mission on that day; they were to wreak the Lord's vengeance on their sinful brethren. They were addressed by Moses: "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword at his side, pass on, and return from gate to gate in the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbour." — The sons of Levi obeyed this fearful mandate, and three thousand Israelites fell on that day: "for Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord, yea, every man with his son, and with his brother, and bring upon yourselves a blessing to-day." —. Then Moses prayed again to God, and said: "Oh this people has sinned a great sin, and they have made to themselves a god of gold. And now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin —; but if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written. And the Lord said to Moses, Whosoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book: therefore, now go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to thee. Behold, My messenger shall go before thee; and in the day

when I visit, I shall visit their sin upon them." — The Israelites were to continue their journey to the land of promise, but the presence of the Lord would not be in the midst of them; for, said God, "Thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee on the way."— When the Hebrews heard these words, they were afflicted with grief, laid off their ornaments, and delivered themselves up to mourning. But Moses was commanded to pitch his tent outside the camp, and called it the "Tent of Meeting;" for here God met His servant Moses and communed with him. When the prophet went into the tent, all the people rose and looked until he was lost from their sight in a pillar of cloud, from which God "spoke to him face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." And as the pillar of cloud hovered above the door, the people, full of awe and reverence, bowed themselves down and worshipped. When Moses returned to the camp, he prayed to God with fervour and zeal until he received the promise that God's glorious presence would lead the people onwards.

44. RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT.

[Exod. XXXIII. XXXIV.]

Then Moses full of faith and trust exclaimed: "O show me Thy glory." He longed to see the whole mysterious greatness of God, who had hitherto only appeared to him in a cloud of smoke. But "no man might see the Lord and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon the rock; and it shall come to pass, while My glory passes by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by. And then I will take away My hand, and thou shalt see My back, but My face cannot be seen."

For the second time Moses, on the command of God, ascended to the heights of Sinai, alone and unseen by all, bearing in his hand two tables of stone which he had hewn instead of those he had broken. As he stood on the summit of the mountain, the Lord descended in a cloud, and once again He repeated His promises to Moses; nay He revealed to him His very nature and being. Passing before His servant, He said: "The Eternal, the Eternal, a God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means always leave unpunished, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, to the third and to the fourth generation." He then renewed, through Moses, His covenant with the Israelites, briefly re-iterating the principal pledges and commands previously given and revealing the pith of the new creed: "Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord; for it is a terrible thing which I will do with thee. — Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. — Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee. But you shall destroy their altars, break their images, and annihilate their Ashtartes. For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, Zealous is His name, He is a Zealous God, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land; for when they go astray after their gods, and sacrifice to their gods, they might invite thee, and thou mightest eat of their sacrifice, and take of their daughters to thy sons, and

when thy daughters go astray after their gods, they might make thy sons go astray after their gods. — Thou shalt make to thyself no molten gods. — The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib, for in the month Abib thou camest out of Egypt.— All that opens the womb is Mine, and all thy male cattle which is born, the firstling of ox or of sheep. But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou dost not redeem it, then shalt thou break its neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem.— And none shall appear before Me empty.— Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in the time of ploughing and of reaping thou shalt rest.— And thou shalt observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's circuit. Thrice in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. For I shall expel the nations before thee, and enlarge thy boundaries: nor shall any man desire thy land, when thou goest up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.— Thou shalt not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven; nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left to the morning. — The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring to the house of the Lord thy God. — Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk."

Moses stayed forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai, during which time "he neither ate bread nor drank water"; and the Lord wrote again the Ten Commandments on the tablets of stone.

And now Moses descended the rocky sides of the mountain, and this time he was awaited by Aaron and the Israelites with reverential awe. As he came from the presence of the Lord, his face shone with a heavenly light. The people could not look upon him; they were afraid of the

wonderful radiance that played round him. But he called Aaron, and the elders of the congregation, and the whole people, and communicated to them all the words of the Lord which he had heard on Mount Sinai. And when he had finished speaking, he covered the glory of his face with a veil, a symbol of deep and earnest reflection, which should not be disturbed by outward objects; but when he communed with the Lord or with the people, he lifted the veil from his face.

45. ERECTION OF THE TABERNACLE.

[Exod. XXXV–XXXVIII. XL.]

When Moses proclaimed to the Israelites how they should build a Tabernacle for the Lord, they were full of gladness and of alacrity to construct the sacred edifice as a fit and permanent dwelling-place for the glory of God. All, both men and women, brought their share, their free-will gift, according to their ability. All offered cheerfully their wealth and their labour, their skill and their ingenuity, to promote the holy undertaking. The camp soon presented a most lively appearance. But in order to avoid confusion or dispute, one master-mind was to have the entire supervision of the work.

Bezaleel of the tribe of Judah was selected for that purpose. He was endowed with the spirit of wisdom and of understanding. He was a man experienced in all workmanship, able to invent designs in gold and silver or brass, to carve in wood, and to cut and set precious stones. With him was associated Aholiab of the tribe of Dan, who was a skilful weaver, and who, under the directions of Bezaleel, wove and embroidered the curtains, the hangings, and the priestly vestments.

The work was carried on with zeal and eagerness. The women came laden with ornaments, with their necklaces, rings, and bracelets of gold, while the men gave the skins, the fine wool, and the various other materials, such as brass and acacia wood. All who were able worked busily, and brought their textures of fine linen, spun goats' hair, and cloths of blue and crimson. Then the chiefs of Israel came forward with their treasures, their onyx-stones and their sparkling jewels, for the ephod and breast-plate of the High-priest. Nor were wanting the oil for the lamps, and the spices for the ointment and the incense. All these gifts were contributed in such large supplies that at last the workmen could find no use for them, and Moses was compelled to restrain the ardour of the people by proclaiming throughout the camp, that both men and women were to cease bringing their offerings.

At last all was finished; and "Moses looked upon the work, and, behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded; and Moses blessed them."

On the first day of the first month, nearly a year after the departure from Egypt, the Tabernacle of the Lord was erected by Moses, and all the sacred implements were put in their due places in the Holy of Holies, the Sanctuary, and the Court. The tablets of the Law were deposited in the Ark, the shew-bread was placed on the golden Table, the Candlestick lighted with the holy oil, and incense burnt on the golden Altar; while the Laver in the Court was filled with water, "that Moses and Aaron and his sons might wash their hands and their feet when they went into the Tabernacle, and when they approached the Altar." Then Moses was enjoined to anoint and thereby to consecrate the holy edifice with all its vessels, and to clothe and anoint Aaron and his sons for their appointed ministrations. Yet before these commands were carried out, some other laws were

proclaimed that were indispensable for the proper performance of the task.

So then the Tabernacle, brilliant with colour, sparkling with gold and silver, and enclosing the word of God in its innermost Sanctuary, rose before the enchanted gaze of the Israelites. But this was not all; the Tabernacle was visibly to be marked as the seat of the glory of the Lord. The people saw a cloud cover the Tent, and the heavenly radiance filled the habitation so completely that even Moses was unable to enter. "And when the cloud arose from the Tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys; but if the cloud did not arise, then they did not journey till the day that it arose. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the Tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys."

46. THE HEBREW SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS.

[Levit. I—VII. XXII, 18—33; Num. V, 5—10. XV. XXVIII. XXIX; Deut. XII, 11—18, 26, 27. XXVI, 1—11.]

The place of worship had been duly appointed by God, the priests had been chosen, their garments prescribed, their consecration ordained. The Israelites were now not only a free, but destined to be a holy people, the people of God. The purity of their faith was to be their mark of distinction among the nations of the earth. All others worshipped a multitude of idols; the Israelites were to do homage to the One God. All others bowed down before representations of created things, or before vain productions of their own imagination; the Hebrews prostrated their hearts before the glory of the Lord, whom they pictured by no figure or image. Their faith was indeed totally different from that

of the nations around them: does the same hold true with respect to their worship? Far from it: their faith was Divine, but the form of their worship was necessarily human; and adapted as it was to the requirements of an imperfectly educated people, it inevitably consisted of ceremonies and varied rituals.

Worship is generally expressive of one of three feelings — of thanksgiving, supplication, and contrition. We either praise the Lord for the benefits He has bestowed upon us; or we implore His help; or we confess our failings and sins. These religious impulses were naturally the same in the Hebrew and the heathen worshipper, however different their creeds may have been. The priest of the Lord and the priest of Dagon solicited blessings through their sacrifices, although the one addressed his prayers to the Eternal and Merciful King, whilst the other bowed down before an impotent idol. The earliest stage of worship was that of sacrifices and offerings. These are found among nearly every nation of antiquity, and seem, therefore, to be prompted by a common human feeling. Yet with respect to them a clear progress is discernible.

In the remotest times and among the least cultivated nations, sacrifices were offered from motives of awe and fear. The worshippers wished to propitiate their gods, and to avert their wrath. Gradually a feeling of gratitude pervaded their hearts; successful men were proud of their flocks and herds, of their vineyards and olive-groves, and they conveyed their thanks to the deities by appropriate sacrifices. Still later, when beauty, ease, and comfort found their way into man's life, he was induced, by a sentiment of joy, to share with the gods the best parts of his property; sacrificial repasts were held, in which the worshipper appeared as a friend of his god. Thus there were successively fear-offerings, thank-offerings, and joy-offerings.

Moreover, vows were a most important form of religious service. A person about to engage in some difficult or dangerous enterprise, pledged himself, in case of success or deliverance, to a self-imposed sacrifice, that is, he offered a vow. This feeling, honourable in itself, became, however, too often a fearful evil by a narrow-minded application. A vow was deemed irrevocable, even if it was fatal and criminal in its effects, even if it demanded the life of a beloved and innocent child.

But in the lapse of ages, as religious education advanced, it was felt that man ought not only to demand benefits, or express his gratitude when he had received them, but that, before he approached the altar with his gifts and supplications, he ought to expiate the guilty deeds which weighed upon his conscience. Thus his sacrifices became sin-offerings and purifications. And then profound minds became aware that the innate frailty of man will ever make him liable to transgression, and that sin-offerings were required not merely for special offences, but for human life in general with its temptations and moral trials. Thus humility-sacrifices were introduced, the last and highest stage of offering, the one nearest allied to the sacrifice of the heart and spirit — to prayer. But to prayer as a principal mode of worship, the ancient Hebrews were not permitted to advance. Supplications are indeed to be found in the Scriptures; but the prayers of Hannah, of David, of Solomon, and others, though beautiful and breathing piety and fervour, were only regarded as additions to sacrificial offerings; and though they were often the spontaneous outpourings of gratitude, despair, and entreaty, they were not an invariable or indispensable part of worship. The sacrifices were the material expression of prayer, and the different kinds of offering explained sufficiently what prayer they denoted.

We shall now consider the sacrifices of the Hebrews as ordained in the Pentateuch. For this purpose, we shall have recourse to a work from which we have obtained assistance before. *

The sacrifices consisted either of animal or of vegetable offerings. As a rule, the burnt-, the expiatory, and the purification-offerings were animal sacrifices, while the thank-offerings could be either animal or vegetable. The sacrifices of animals were generally accompanied by a cereal offering, and by a libation of wine or a drink-offering.

The following table comprises the chief offerings of the Hebrews:

I. Burnt-offering — exclusively an animal sacrifice.

II. Joy-offering — either animal or vegetable.
   1. Praise-offering.
   2. Thank-offering.
   3. Paschal-offering.
   4. Offering of firstborn animals.
   5. Offering of firstfruits.
      a. Offering of the first new ears of corn.
      b. Offering of the first new bread.
      c. Offering of the firstfruits of other vegetable productions.

III. Expiatory Offering.
   1. Sin-offering — mainly animal.
   2. Trespass-offering — animal.
   3. Offering of jealousy — vegetable.

IV. Purification-offering — mainly animal.
   1. After childbirth.
   2. After recovery from leprosy.
   3. After recovery from illness.

* *Kalisch*, Commentary on Leviticus, Part I.

V. Drink-offering.
VI. Shew-bread.
VII. Incense-offering.

The victims were naturally limited to "clean animals". Therefore of *quadrupeds*, the cloven-footed ruminants were permitted: "But among these again the Law singled out the species which formed the ordinary food of the Israelites, were most valuable to agriculturists, and therefore really involved a *sacrifice*, an act of devoted self-denial; especially as the same animals, being bred, reared, and domesticated by the worshipper, bore a close connection with his pursuits and his ordinary life, and were creatures which he 'had toiled for and made grow.' Hence the quadrupeds ordained for sacrifices were not beasts like the hart, the roebuck, or the fallow deer, though these were considered clean and lawful for food, but mainly *cattle*, whether from the *herd* or from the *flock*; of the former class the *bullock* and *ox*, the *cow* and *calf*; of the latter class the *sheep* and the *goat*." (*Ibid.* Levit. pp. 78, 79.)

Of *fowls*, *turtle-doves* alone and *young pigeons* were to be offered, because they were abundantly reared and kept in Palestine, and formed the principal animal food of the poor, though they were also found wild in mountains and ravines throughout the country. *Fishes* were not at all accepted as sacrifices, evidently because they multiply freely in the water, without the care and control of man.

"The significance of all these restrictions is manifest: the Law demanded for sacrifices not merely the tamest animals, and such which were most readily at hand, but those which, at the same time, reminded the worshippers of their daily labour, of their dependence on Him who had allowed it to prosper, and of their deep obligations to His unceasing beneficence. Although the stag and the deer, when kept

and bred, were unquestionably the property of individuals, they could, as a species, not be claimed by legal owners, and might well be regarded, even if not presented on the altar, as belonging to God, the Lord of nature: 'I will take no bullock, says God, out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds; for every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon thousands of hills.' Not all productions of the land, nor all the articles of food, were demanded, but those only which man had made his own by honest exertion and watchful care. The oblations were indeed to represent the property and sustenance, but also the active life and energy of the people. They were a partial restitution of the blessings which God had mercifully vouchsafed to the offerer; they impressed the seal of religion upon his gain; they hallowed his life for the maintenance of which that gain was destined." (*Ibid.* p. 81.)

Similar principles decided the selection of the *vegetable productions* which were to be taken for the bloodless offerings, viz. *flour* — or in some cases *roasted grains* rubbed out of the early ears of corn — *wine*, and *oil*, which three productions are often mentioned as the principal means of sustenance, and the staple of Canaan's wealth. Salt was to be added on nearly all occasions. "Not the free and common gifts or the spontaneous vegetation of nature, however esteemed and precious, were to be dedicated to the Deity, not figs, pomegranates, dates, or almonds, though forming characteristic products of Palestine, but those objects only which the offerer had made his individual property by exertion and anxious attention, and which he had obtained by the sweat of his brow: gratitude, humility, self-abnegation, and the reality of a hard-working life were to be mirrored in every offering." (*Ibid.* p. 85.)

Bloodless oblation. — Vegetable offerings were presented at least as early as animal sacrifices, especially by poorer persons. But in the course of time, the notion evidently

gained ground that sacrifices, like ordinary repasts, ought to consist not only of meat, but also of vegetables or cereals and of wine. Hence it was ordained that all usual burnt- and thank-offerings should be accompanied by vegetable and drink-offerings. However, a cereal oblation was frequently presented alone as an independent sacrifice, for instance, by the nation every sabbath, when the twelve cakes of shew-bread were placed on the golden Table in the Holy; on the second day of Passover, when the first sheaf of ripe barley was offered; and on Pentecost, when the first loaves baked of the new wheat were laid on the altar; it was presented by the very poor as a sin-offering for certain offences instead of an animal sacrifice; and in nearly all these cases the oblation was to consist of not less than one tenth of an ephah, or an omer of flour, which quantity was supposed to be required for the daily food of one person.

Drink-offering. — The Law, regulating an old practice or custom, prescribed that every animal holocaust or thank-offering, whether public or private, if consisting of a quadruped, should be accompanied not only by a cereal gift, but also by a libation of wine, which perhaps formed part of indepedent cereal oblations also.

"The mode of libation is not described in the Law, but it appears that at least a part of the wine was out of golden vessels poured into the flames, and thus came upon the brazen altar, like the meat and the fat, the flour and the cakes, the oil and the incense, as 'food to the Lord' or 'an offering made by fire, a sweet odour to the Lord,' while the rest was probably, like the blood, poured out at the sides of the brazen altar. In this manner all the wine was disposed of, and the priests who were forbidden to drink any strong beverage when they entered the holy precincts, received no part of it." (*Ibid.* p. 230.)

Burnt-offering. — Holocausts belong to the most important forms of offering; for they involve most perfectly the idea of *sacrifice*, and express the absolute submission to the power of the Deity. They were the foundation and the principal characteristic of the public worship of the Hebrews. "Killed at the central Sanctuary, they were designed by the Law to keep alive the feeling of humble dependence on Jehovah, and were used as a chief acknowledgment of His theocratic rule. They marked the habitual tone of the religious life of the nation, for which reason the fire was to be permanently maintained on the brazen altar, both by day and night." They were presented in the name of the people, throughout the year, every morning and every evening, on every sabbath and day of the new-moon, on the three great agricultural festivals, when the people assembled to appear before the Lord, on the Day of Memorial celebrated on the first day of the seventh month, and on the Day of Atonement. They were also prescribed for people recovering from various kinds of illness, and for the Nazarite when he had been defiled by contact with a corpse. They were a part of the ceremonials of consecration — when the Tabernacle or Temple was dedicated; when Aaron and his sons were ordained as priests; when the Levites were appointed as their ministers: on such occasions they were to denote the supremacy of God, to whom all men were subjected and to whom the priests owed their power as delegates and instruments. — But apart from the compulsory offering of holocausts ordained by the Law, they had a supreme importance as voluntary sacrifices. They were left in a great measure to the option of the pious, when on any particular occasion of joy, sorrow, or deliverance from peril and illness, they were anxious to testify their reverential submission, or their trust in God's power and mercy. In these cases, they frequently partook of the character of

expiatory offerings, conveying a general expression of human weakness and sinfulness. Thus when the whole congregation unwittingly sinned or transgressed a Divine commandment, they were ordered to offer for their expiation both a bullock as a burnt-offering and a goat as a sin-offering. Indeed, holocausts were considered as an atonement when offered in a proper spirit. — The holocaust has therefore not unjustly been called the best and highest, the choicest and most exquisite kind of sacrifice; it was always to consist of an unblemished *male* animal, whether bullock, ram, or goat, because the male animals were considered the superior species; and although the Law permitted or prescribed also holocausts of pigeons and turtle-doves of either sex, so as to render them accessible to poorer persons, the larger quadrupeds were selected in preference, and often slain in vast numbers. Thus we are told that Solomon, when his succession was secured, offered 1,000 animals; when he was anointed, 1,000 bullocks, 1,000 rams, and 1,000 lambs; and when he consecrated the Temple, 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep.

But we hear of burnt-offerings long before the days of king Solomon. They appear indeed in the very earliest records of the Bible. Abel, the shepherd, sacrificed the firstlings of his flocks; Noah presented a burnt-offering after leaving the Ark; Abraham offered the ram he had seen in a thicket when his son Isaac was restored to him. Thus from the first patriarchs of old, the Hebrews testified, by means of holocausts, their self-denial, submission, and religious awe.

Thank-offerings were intended as an acknowledgment of some temporal boon, and were naturally associated with feelings of a joyful and domestic character. God, the Master and Judge, was merged in God, the Benefactor and Rescuer.

The victims, whether of the herd or the flock, were not required to be males; female animals were equally acceptable. The bloodless oblation added to the thank-offering, consisted, in some cases, not only of unleavened cakes and wafers, but also of leavened bread, to remind the Israelite of his ordinary life and subsistence. Not the whole animal was burnt, but some special parts only were delivered up to the Deity as "an offering made by fire, a sweet odour to the Lord." Two portions, the breast and the right shoulder, were reserved for the priests, who ate them with their wives, their children, and their servants, within the precincts of the Sanctuary, while the rest was consumed in convivial feasts, in any part of the sacred town, by the offerer himself, with his family and household, with the Levite, the poor, and the stranger, his invited guests. All the fat, together with the members and organs to which it is chiefly attached, as the kidneys and the fat tail of certain kinds of sheep, was burnt to God on the altar; and the cereal oblation which belonged to the thank-offering, was richly prepared with oil; for not only were the cakes and wafers mingled and anointed, but the flour itself of which they were made, was sometimes saturated with it: therefore *fatness*, typical of abundance and prosperity, of joy and gratitude, appears to have been the leading characteristic of thank-offerings.

Expiatory Sacrifices. — These offerings grew, as has been observed, from a feeling of human weakness — a feeling which the Scriptures express in a thousand varied forms; a feeling which no trials, no miracles, no success, and no failure could change; which made itself heard in all ages, from the wanderings in the desert to the days of the exile. But, as a rule, the expiatory offerings were only permitted in cases of inadvertent or unintentional transgression; they were not

accepted for deeds of wanton impiety or reckless violence. "The knowledge that 'the cogitation of man's heart is evil from his youth', was to afford no pretext for leniency to premeditated malice, but was, on the contrary, to stimulate to vigilance and self-control. Divine forgiveness should be granted to the imperfection, but not to the perversion of human nature. The precepts of the Law, being the emanation of Divine wisdom, bore the stamp of holiness; they could not, without offence to their all-wise Author, be violated under any circumstances, or in any manner whatever; they required, therefore, atonement even if transgressed unconsciously: their absolute sanctity marked every trespass as a deplorable guilt to be expiated by a sacrifice of self-humiliation." (*Ibid.* p. 253.)

Hence the sin-offering, if an animal, was neither accompanied by a cereal offering, nor by a libation of wine; if a cereal offering, it was presented without oil and frankincense: in the former case, it was to lose the character of social and domestic enjoyment, since it was no "food of the Lord;" and in the latter, it was not to recall the ideas of cheerfulness and festivity, of abundance and ornament; wherefore it was not designated "a sweet odour to the Lord." The flesh of those sin-offerings the blood of which did not come into the Holy, was indeed eaten by the male Aaronites, but the repast was serious and severe, devoid of genial conviviality, and forming a part of the ritual of expiation. Therefore the sin-offerings were naturally placed in the class of "most holy" sacrifices. If any of their blood had fallen upon a garment, the latter was to be washed in the holy place, in the Court of the Sanctuary. Their flesh could be touched by holy persons or priests only; it was burnt entirely whenever the blood had been sprinkled on the vail and put upon the horns of the altar of incense in the Holy; it was eaten, with the exception of the fat and the fat parts,

by the male Aaronites in the holy place; whenever the blood had been put upon the horns, and poured out at the bottom of the altar of burnt-offering in the Court.

The Law was so anxious to secure the expiation of sin under all circumstances, that it permitted poor persons to present as a sin-offering a cereal oblation, simply consisting of the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour, of which the priest took off a handful as a memorial, and burnt it on the brazen altar, while the rest belonged to the priest, and then "the poor man's sin was atoned for and he was forgiven."

The Pentateuch mentions two kinds of expiatory sacrifices—the Sin-offerings and the Trespass-offerings. The former were presented, in the name of the whole people, on all the great festivals and days of solemn consecration, on Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles, on the Day of Memorial or the first day of the seventh month, and on the Day of Atonement. They also accompanied the inauguration of any great public functionary, as the consecration of Aaron and his sons, and seven days later, the commencement of their new duties; they preceded the initiation of the Levites and the dedication of a new Sanctuary. Moreover, they were connected with deliverance from serious perils, diseases, and impurities, every illness being considered the consequence of some transgression, or the result of man's general imperfection.

The animals killed for *trespass-offerings* were males in all cases; most commonly a *ram* seems to have been chosen, probably because sheep and especially rams were the primitive medium of currency, chiefly for paying fines, and were, therefore, peculiarly appropriate, since trespass-offerings were originally presented as penalties for fraud.

The mode of sacrificing was, for all cases, minutely laid down by the Law, and varied according to the different occasions.

"As we survey the expiatory offerings of the Hebrews, which for purity stand unrivalled in the ancient world, we are bound to admit that they were pre-eminently calculated to keep alive among the nation those feelings on which all religious life depends, and from which it flows as its natural source, the feelings of human sinfulness, and the conviction of Divine holiness, by the standard of which that sinfulness is to be measured; they fostered, therefore, at once humility and an ideal yearning; and they effectually counteracted that sense of self-righteousness natural indeed to the pride of man, but utterly destructive of all nobler virtues. They were well suited to secure in the directest and completest manner that singleness of life and heart, which is the true end of all sacrifices. Every Israelite was to feel his transgression personally and individually; hence the sin-offerings were carefully and designedly varied according to the sinner's rank and position, both with regard to the choice of the victim and the mode of the ceremonial; whereas the holocausts, symbolising as they did merely a general admission of the common frailty inherent in human nature, were uniform for all persons.

But the religious legislation was not to be brought into collision with the civil and political enactments; it was, on the contrary, meant to support and strengthen them; so far from endangering the safety of the state by an ill-advised leniency, it helped to eradicate the natural propensity to crime and lawlessness; its operation was therefore limited to involuntary trespasses, while the secular authorities were left free to deal with pre-meditated offences; it even abstained from interfering in some important cases of unintentional misdeeds, such as homicide, for which it prescribed no sacrifice, but admitted a worldly punishment: satisfied to act as a silent instrument for the reformation of the hearts, it indeed effectually contracted the application,

but did not injudiciously weaken the authority of the criminal code. Hence, though bearing the character of vicariousness, the sin-offerings were far from encouraging an external worship by lifeless ceremonies; in themselves the spontaneous offspring of religious repentance, and thus naturally helping to nourish the same beneficent feeling, they were the strongest guarantee for a life of honesty and active virtue." (*Ibid.* p. 281.)

47. THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES.

[Exod. XXIX; Levit. VIII—X. XXI. XXII; Num. III. IV. VIII. etc.]

Before we proceed with our narrative, it is necessary to give a short account of the priesthood, which forms so important a part in the economy of the Hebrew institutions. Although the priests seldom evinced the sublime and pure devotion of the Hebrew prophets; although they were at times justly censured for venality, indolence, and faithlessness: they were the appointed guardians of the Law, and the elected intercessors between the chosen people and their God.

In the patriarchal ages, the father of each family was the priest of his own household. He built the altar, he burnt the incense, he offered the sacrifices. Thus there was a temple of God in each rude tent. This arrangement was strengthened by the prevailing notion that the firstborn sons belonged specially to God, and were therefore naturally devoted to His service. But when, after the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt, a political commonwealth was to be organised, it was found a practical impossibility that just the chiefs of the families upon whom so many duties and responsibilities devolved, should give themselves up entirely to the priestly function. It was, therefore, ordained that in the place of the firstborn of each family, a

member of one chosen tribe should perform the offices of priesthood.

The tribe of Levi was, in early times, conspicuous for fierce and indomitable courage; it long preserved many of its characteristics of daring and violence; and it was from this hardy warrior tribe, that the Hebrew priests were taken.

The Levites were invested with prominent lustre and glory by the name of Moses; and they had, on several important occasions, exhibited a praise-worthy zeal and devotion in the cause of religion. Yet the priesthood was not conferred upon Moses, but upon his elder brother Aaron and his lineal descendants; with remarkable consistency, all the remaining branches of the tribe — that is, the families of Gershon and Merari, of Izhar and Uzziel, and of Moses himself — were set apart as the ministers of the priests, or the Levites in the stricter sense, and had to perform the more menial duties in connection with the service of the Sanctuary.

The priests were required to be without personal blemish of any kind. They were probably only permitted to officiate during the best years of their strength, and thus they represented the flower and manhood of the people.

Next to righteousness of life and faultlessness of form, external purity was considered the chief emblem of godliness. Therefore, the priest had to keep aloof from every thing that might make him unclean. He was not allowed to approach dead bodies except those of his nearest blood-relations—of his father and mother, of his son and daughter, his brother and unmarried sister; and if he officiated at the altar in a state of impurity, he had to fear the punishment of excision.

However, piety and holiness were the first and chief requirements of the priest; for he was called upon to glorify

God by his conduct and actions, and not by his teachings alone. A priest's daughter who had been guilty of any moral offence, was given over to the flames. Wine or any strong beverage, calculated to disturb perfect clearness of thought, was strictly forbidden during the time of ministrations. In affliction or bereavement, the priest was not to abandon himself to a vehement display of grief, but to maintain, as much as possible, a serene composure.

As it was deemed necessary to relieve the priests from material cares and anxieties, they were amply provided for by the Law, and received from the produce and the sacrifices of the Hebrews very considerable portions. Thirteen towns within the provinces of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin, were assigned to them as their abodes. They were free from military service and all taxes. Thus they could devote themselves undisturbed to their important duties.

These duties were manifold. They embraced the service in the Court, the Holy, and the Holy of Holies. The priests had to perform all the significant rites connected with offerings, especially to sprinkle the blood and burn the flesh, to heave and wave the dedicated portions of victims, and to burn the memorial in cereal oblations. They had to keep up the perpetual fire on the brazen altar in the Court, and there to offer the regular daily holocausts. They had to burn the incense on the golden altar in the Holy, to dress the lamps of the Candlestick, and to remove every sabbath from the Shew-bread table the twelve unleavened cakes, and to replace them by new ones. During the wanderings of the Hebrews, they had to guard the Tabernacle and its utensils, to wrap them up when the journeys were resumed, and to deliver them to the Levites for transport. Whenever individuals or the whole nation had publicly to perform religious rites, the priests were the mediators or agents; for instance, in the ceremonies preceding the release

of the Nazarite; at the ordeal prescribed for suspected wives; at the expiation of an untraced murder; and at the examination and cleansing of leprous persons, houses, and garments. They were probably the physicians of the nation over which they exercised a kind of sanitary supervision. They regulated the calendar, and watched over the legal accuracy of weights and measures. They had, at certain times, in peace and war, to blow the silver trumpets. They accompanied military expeditions, sometimes with the Ark of the Covenant. Before the commencement of battle, they had to encourage the soldiers with the following address: "Hear, o Israel, approach this day to battle against your enemies; let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble nor be terrified on account of them; for it is the Lord your God who goes with you, to fight with you against your enemies to save you."

As they were specially elected and invested with the Divine spirit, it was their particular mission to study the Law, to teach and to diffuse it, and "to instruct the children of Israel in all the statutes which the Lord had spoken to them through Moses." They had to read every seven years on the Feast of Tabernacles the principal laws of the Pentateuch to the assembled people, "that they may listen and learn, and fear the Lord, and observe to do all the words of the Law." It was their privilege to bless the people in the name of God, to consult the Ark of the Covenant or the Urim and Thummim in emergencies of danger or importance, and to act as supreme judges in difficult cases; for "by their word shall every controversy and every violence be tried."

From the nature of all these functions it is apparent that the priests required, on the one hand, a chief who could represent the whole order and act as the mediator between God and the entire people; and, on the other hand,

ministers or assistants who might relieve them from the menial and low duties connected with the service of the Sanctuary. They received a chief in the *High-priest*, and assistants in the *Levites*.

The High-priest, invested both with greater holiness and higher responsibilities, was the embodiment of the theocratic community itself. He was consecrated by a more copious anointment than the common priests, and was, therefore, simply called "the anointed priest" or even distinguished by the name "the holy of the Lord." There could of course only be one High-priest at a time. The sin of the High-priest caused or involved the sin of the nation. The dignity was confined to Aaron and his descendants through Eleazar, the eldest of his surviving sons, and was certainly not extended to any other branch of his tribe. The High-priest was permitted to marry none but a Hebrew virgin. He held his office for life; his death marked an epoch in the existence of the nation; and when it happened, the involuntary homicide who had escaped into a city of refuge, was permitted to return to his home. It was his prerogative especially, to consult the Urim and Thummim, which he wore on his breast. He exercised supreme supervision over the entire public worship. He sacrificed the sin-offering for himself and the people. On the Day of Atonement, he expiated the sins of community by most solemn and imposing rites. He occupied a high position, if he did not preside, in the supreme tribunals. He was not allowed to approach the dead bodies even of his father and his mother. He was rigorously to abstain from all external signs of mourning. He was to keep himself in perfect and constant purity; for "he should not go out of the Sanctuary, nor profane the Sanctuary of his God, for the crown of the anointing oil of God is upon him." His garments were, even in a higher sense than those of the common priests, to be made for

"glory and distinction." They were marked both by greater splendour and higher significance, as has been pointed out above (p. 182). But on the Day of Atonement, when he entered into the Holy of Holies, he had to lay off those magnificent vestments, and modestly to appear in garments of plain white linen.

The Levites, or the ministers of the priests, comprised all the members of the tribe, except the branch of Aaron. Their connection with the public service was not spiritual but menial and mechanical. They were not properly elected by God, but merely set apart for certain subordinate duties. They were, in fact, considered as mere substitutes for the Israelites. They were not allowed to come near the holy implements of the Sanctuary; if they did so, they were to expect death from the hand of God, together with the neglectful priests who permitted the desecration. They were, like the Israelites, restricted to the Court. They were invested with no peculiar significance or holiness. Physical perfection was not required as a necessary condition. All were admitted, and served from the twenty-first or thirtieth to the fiftieth year of their lives. They were initiated in their office by the simplest rites. They were neither clothed nor anointed, but merely cleansed by purifying water. They had no distinguishing garments, and did not differ, in this respect, from the common Israelites. They had "to keep the charge of the Sanctuary," that is, to do the service of the Tent of Meeting. Therefore, during the wanderings of the Israelites, they had to carry the Tabernacle and its vessels, which, however not they, but the priests alone, were permitted to wrap up under penalty of certain death. During the encampments, they were stationed round the holy structure. They assisted in the offering of sacrifices, especially in receiving the blood of the victims in the appointed vessels, and presenting it to the priests for

sprinkling. They had to prepare the holy ointment, the shew-bread, and the other unleavened cakes and cereal oblations. When the Temple was built, their functions were naturally enlarged: they were the keepers of the entrances, courts, and chambers, and, in later times, together with the priests, the guardians of the treasury of the Temple; they had the charge of the stores of flour and oil; wine, frankincense, and spices; they attended the morning- and evening-services, where they performed vocal and instrumental music. They were probably chosen for judges of the inferior courts, and for teachers of the people.

When the Levites had thus risen in authority, they were deemed too holy for many of the menial duties, and they received, on their part, servants called Nethinim, who were charged to assist them in the same way, as they had been appointed to assist the priests; the Nethinim were probably captives of war, and were held in great contempt.

The Levites were, in the Pentateuch, liberally provided for. They had, indeed, no landed property, but they received, in return for their services at the Sanctuary, the tenth part of all the produce of the soil and of the annual increase of the cattle; of the former, however, they had to give the tenth part to the priests. Though exempt from military service and all taxes, they yet probably received a share of the booty of war. They had abodes assigned to them in thirty-five cities on both sides of the Jordan, within the territories of all tribes, except those of Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon, in which the priests had their dwellings; and to each town, fields were attached sufficient for pasturage.

48. VARIOUS LEVITICAL LAWS.

1. *Dietary Laws* (Levit. XI. etc.). Purity and holiness were to be the chief characteristics of the Hebrew people; they were to be manifested in their faith and worship, in their moral conduct and daily life. Bearing this in mind, we shall be able duly to estimate the value of the dietary laws, which, though perhaps partly sanitary in their origin, were invested with a religious sanctity, and connected with the great principle, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Man was allowed to feed on the flesh of animals, but he was restricted in his choice. Among quadrupeds, the legislator considered as clean and wholesome cloven-footed ruminants, among birds those which do not prey on dead bodies, and among fishes those which have fins and scales: these alone he permitted, whereas he rigidly interdicted all other creatures, as the camel, the pig, and the hare, the eagle, the vulture and the hawk, and especially "creeping things", which were declared to be an abomination, and to cause uncleanness if touched when dead. Moreover, he prohibited the people from eating all animals that had not been properly killed, because they might be unwholesome, and all that were torn by wild beasts, because they were stifled in their own blood; and blood was interdicted by the most awful penalties, because "the blood is the soul" of the animal, which it was regarded iniquitous not to respect; therefore even the blood of animals that had been killed in the chase, was to be poured on the ground and covered with earth. The fat also was forbidden because it was, like the blood, considered as the seat of the life and strength of the animal; and it is likely that for a similar reason the custom arose among the Hebrews of abstaining from the principal (or sciatic) nerve, representing the power of motion, though that custom was derived from a remark-

able incident in the life of the patriarch Jacob (see p. 74). The command, "Thou shalt not seethe the kid in its mother's milk", was probably prompted by motives of humanity, and had, besides, the object of preventing certain superstitious rites practised by heathens.

2. *The Laws of Purification* (Lev. XIII—XV. etc.) were enforced with great severity and precision. Foremost among them are the rules to be observed with respect to that terrible Eastern scourge, leprosy. As soon as the first symptoms of illness were noticed, the sufferer was removed from the community, and placed under the supervision of the priest: if the symptoms developed themselves into the dread disease, he was kept in seclusion; and whenever he went forth into the abodes of men, he had to appear with his clothes rent, his head bared, and his chin covered, and to utter the doleful warning: "Unclean, unclean!" If the plague left him, he was cleansed by various and significant purifications meant to symbolise his renewed holiness in thought and in deed, and restoring him again to all his rights as a member of the chosen community. A terrible plague akin to leprosy is, in the East, not unusual in *houses*, when the stones of the walls are covered with green or red streaks. As soon as the priest received information of such symptoms, he went to examine the house, and at once ordered everything to be cleared out of it; after seven days he returned, and if the marks had made progress during that time, the stones so affected were, by his direction, taken away and cast into an unclean place without the city, the interior of the house was thoroughly scraped, and the dust likewise removed beyond the precincts of the city, after which the stones and the dust were replaced by new stones and mortar. But the signs of pestilence might still linger in the walls and appear again and spread. In such cases, the whole house was pronounced thoroughly unclean, and was pulled down; all the stones

were cast out of the city, and everyone who had been in the house during the time of its unwholesome condition, was unclean, and was bound to undergo the usual purifications.

3. *The Nazarites* (Numb. VI.). Among the Hebrews, there were found, at all times, men and women who, impressed with a feeling of religious fervour, wished to devote themselves for a certain period to the special service of God. These Nazarites, as they were called, led a life of abstinence and isolation. They shunned wine and any other strong drink. They allowed their hair to grow freely. Bound by ordinances resembling the severest rules enjoined upon the priesthood, they were forbidden to touch or approach any dead body, were it even that of father or mother, of brother or sister, "because the consecration of his God is upon the Nazarite's head; all the days of his separation he is holy to the Lord." An accidental and unavoidable defilement was expiated by impressive ceremonies. When the time of the self-imposed seclusion had passed, the Nazarite had to present, with peculiar rites, a burnt-, a sin-, and a thank-offering, together with various bloodless oblations and drink-offerings; and cutting his hair at the door of the Sanctuary, he burnt it by the fire of his thank-offering — after which he was released from his vow and his restrictions.

4. *Miscellaneous laws.* The ordinances of purity, so minutely and so strongly enforced, are clearly illustrated by the details given concerning the laws of marriage.

The human form was considered sacred; no mutilation was permitted; and in the wild outpouring of grief, the mourner was forbidden to lacerate his flesh — a custom widely prevailing among Eastern nations (Lev. XIX, 27. 28).

The religious precepts of the Mosaic code are of endless variety, indeed as varied as life itself with its many duties and temptations; but they seem all to be summed up in two commandments, which have become as it were the very key-

stone and mainspring of the Jewish faith: "Hear o Israel, the Lord thy God is One God;" and "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might" (Deut. VI. 5). These words were to be the constant guide and monitor of the Hebrew; he was steadfastly to believe in the unity of God, and he was to devote all his thoughts, his feelings, and his works to Him, his merciful Father. Not merely was he to serve Him in reverence and fear, but with that true and fervent love, on which alone faith can be firmly built.

To remind the Israelite of the allegiance he owes to his God, he was commanded to wear a symbol of it on his arm and forehead (*phylacteries*), to indicate that he should be pious in deed and thought; he was to make blue fringes on the borders of his outer garment (*tsitsith*), to impress upon him heavenly purity and elevation of mind; and he was to inscribe a memorial of it upon the doorpost of his house (*mezuzah*), to remind him that his life should be zealously devoted to God (Exod. XIII, 9; Num. XV, 38; Deut. XI, 20).

Above all, it was prescribed that children should be diligently instructed by their parents in the precious truths that had been revealed for the guidance of mankind in all ages.

The precepts of the Law are followed by a grand and sublime picture enforcing the oft repeated lesson that obedience and faith shall be truly blessed, that sin and disobedience shall receive terrible punishment. To render the injunctions more impressive, the Israelites were commanded after the conquest of the promised land, solemnly to pronounce the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal, and thus as it were to confirm their own reward and their own punishment (Lev. XXVI; Deut. XXVIII).

49. DEATH OF NADAB AND ABIHU.

[Levit. X.]

It will be remembered that we interrupted our narrative, in order to insert a sketch of the moral, religious, and social legislation of the Hebrews; we now resume it to follow the events recorded in the Pentateuch.

It has been related how Aaron was installed in the priestly office to which his descendants were to be heirs for ever. But although they were thus suddenly elevated to a post of great distinction, they were not declared holy and sinless; they were by their lives to prove their worthiness of ministering in the Tabernacle of the Lord. But Aaron's two eldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, showed too soon that their minds were not prepared for the high privileges conferred upon them: they were wanting in reverence and faithful obedience. At an irregular time, they brought "strange fire", that is, fire not taken from the brazen altar in the Court of the Tabernacle, and burnt incense to the Lord. The offence was followed by instantaneous retribution; fire descended from Heaven, and killed the two self-willed men. On this occasion the peculiar sanctity of the Hebrew priesthood was strikingly revealed. Aaron was naturally overwhelmed with grief by the awful disaster; but Moses approached him with the words: "This is it that the Lord spoke, saying, I will be sanctified through those that are near Me, and before all the people I will be glorified." Aaron felt the truth and significance of the rebuke, and he was silent. But Moses pursued his object still further; for he said to his bereaved brother Aaron and his two surviving sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not let your heads be dishevelled, nor rend your clothes lest you die, and lest God be wroth upon all the congregation; and you shall not go out from the doors of the Tabernacle, lest you die; for the

anointing oil of the Lord is upon you;" the ministers of God were to subdue their human and natural sympathies, in order to live for His service alone, in perfect unworldliness and holiness.

50. WANDERINGS IN THE DESERT.

[Num. I sqq.]

The Israelites had been journeying for a year in the wilderness, when Moses was commanded by the Lord to number them. Each man who had arrived at the age of twenty, and who was therefore able to serve as a soldier, was to be included in the census, with the exception, however, of the tribe of Levi, which was exempt from military and civil burdens. The Israelites numbered 603,550 men capable of bearing arms; among them the tribe of Judah was prominent in strength, counting above 74,000 men. The whole host, including men, women, and children, must therefore have consisted of about two millions and a half souls.

When the people encamped, whether for a shorter or a longer time, the tribes were uniformly arranged in the same prescribed order. In the centre stood the Tabernacle, guarded and protected by the Levites and priests, who surrounded it. On its eastern side encamped Judah, and with him Issachar and Zebulon; to the west Ephraim, together with Benjamin and Manasseh; to the north Dan, with Asher and Naphtali; and to the south Reuben, with Gad and Simeon.

Above the Tabernacle hung a cloud of smoke by day, and a cloud of fire by night. When the Israelites were to move onward, the cloud went before them; and when they were to pitch their tents, the cloud rested. As the Ark was lifted up to precede the advancing army, Moses exclaimed: "Rise up, o Lord, and let Thy enemies be scattered, and let

them that hate Thee flee before Thee;" and when the Ark rested, he said: "Restore, o Lord, the myriads of the hosts of Israel."

In order to arouse the attention of the vast multitude, whether upon the march or during the encampment, Moses was commanded to use two silver trumpets; their loud and significant blast would be a summons for the people and "a memorial" before God; it was to be a signal for the whole community or the chiefs to assemble before the Tabernacle, or to prepare for departure from the encampment; it led the warriors to battle, and proclaimed the holy festivals, the days of gladness and thanksgiving, of solemnity and humiliation.

In the second month of the second year, the cloud rose above the Tabernacle and summoned the Israelites to leave their resting place at Sinai, and to resume their march. They proceeded in a north-easterly direction. The Tabernacle, carefully protected, was carried and watched by the Levites; the Ark of the Covenant was borne in front of the congregation; and the vast host of men, women, and children toiled on, their tents slung on poles, their camels heavily laden, their flocks and herds driven before them. After a three days' journey they arrived in the wilderness of Paran, where the cloud of the Lord rested.

51. SUFFERINGS IN THE DESERT.

[Numb. XI.]

Discontent and impatience arose among the people. Forgetting their promise of trust and obedience, they murmured bitterly against Moses. God in His anger sent fire upon them from heaven, causing terror and destruction. Hence the place was called *Taberah*, that is, Conflagration.

The Hebrews had now subsisted upon manna so long that it became distasteful to them; they began to yearn for flesh

and other food to which they had before been accustomed:- "We remember the fish," they said murmuringly, "which we ate in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is languishing; there is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes." — Moses heard this outcry with sorrow and displeasure; he felt that the burden of guiding and controlling so vast and so mutinous a host was more than he could bear; how could he satisfy their wild clamour for flesh? He cried to God and entreated His help. The Lord listened to his prayer. He commanded him to select seventy of the elders, upon whom He would bestow a part of that Divine spirit which distinguished Moses himself; and He promised that the people should have the flesh they were coveting, but it should come to them as a bitter punishment: "You shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but even a whole month, until it comes out at your nostrils, and it is loathsome to you: because you have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, Why did we come forth out of Egypt?"

Here an episode happened which exhibits the character of Moses in all its purity and greatness. The seventy men selected and endowed with the Divine spirit uttered prophecies: "But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them (they were of those who were written down, but they had not gone out into the Tabernacle), and they prophesied in the camp. And there ran a young man and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad prophesy in the camp. And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Moses from his youth, answered and said, My Lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said to him, Dost thou strive for my sake? would God that all the Lord's

people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His spirit upon them!" — As the Israelites had been declared to be a people of priests, so Moses desired to make them a people of prophets, and to let them share his own spiritual privileges.

Now a strong wind rose and blew flocks of quails into the camp. They came in such multitudes that they covered the ground two cubits high for a space of a day's journey round the camp. The people gathered eagerly, and ate to their full satisfaction. While they were still enjoying that longed-for food, they were smitten by a fearful plague which caused death and desolation in the camp; hence the place received the name *Kivroth-hattaavah*, that is, Graves of Greediness.

52. DISCONTENT OF AARON AND MIRIAM.

[Numb. XII.]

After this terrible punishment, the Israelites journeyed on again in a north-easterly direction, and rested shortly afterwards in Hazeroth. Besides Zipporah, the daughter of the wise old Midianite priest Jethro, Moses had married an Ethiopian woman. This roused discontent in the minds of Aaron and Miriam. They began to think themselves at least equal to Moses, and exclaimed: "Has the Lord spoken only by Moses? has He not also spoken by us?" When the Lord heard this presumptuous speech, He called Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to appear before Him at the Tabernacle. A pillar of cloud descended upon the Tabernacle, and the voice of the Lord said — "Hear My words: if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision, and speak to him in a dream: My servant Moses is not so, to whom I have entrusted all My house; with him I speak mouth to mouth, and let him see, and not in

dark images, and he beholds the similitude of the Lord: wherefore then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" — As the pillar of the cloud departed from their presence, Miriam was smitten with leprosy. And Aaron said to Moses, "Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned." Then Moses prayed, and beseeched the Lord to heal her and to pardon her sin. God granted his prayer, but commanded Miriam to be kept in confinement without the camp for seven days, after which time she was to be purified and received again into the congregation.

53. SCOUTS SENT TO CANAAN.

[Numb. XIII.]

Then the Israelites left Hazeroth, and encamped at Kadesh, in a more northern part of the wilderness of Paran. There the Lord commanded Moses to send twelve distinguished men, one from each tribe, to search the land of Canaan, and to report all they would see and hear about "the people that dwell therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what the cities are that they dwell in, whether in tents or in strongholds; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein or not." They were also told to bring back samples of the fruit of the country. So the twelve men, Caleb and Joshua being among the number, set out northwards through the wilderness of Paran; then turning to the west, they proceeded into the southern part of Palestine, and came into the neighbourhood of Hebron, that ancient city where Abraham had sojourned in ages gone by, and where now dwelt the children of Anak, men of gigantic

stature and terrible appearance. In the valley of Eshcol they found themselves amidst all the most exquisite fruits of the country — pomegranates, figs, and grapes. The vine grew here to such an extraordinary size, that one bunch of grapes had to be carried on poles by two men. After an absence of forty days, the twelve scouts returned to the camp at Kadesh with magnificent specimens of Canaan's produce. We can imagine the excitement which the event caused among the whole congregation. How eagerly they must have questioned the men on the land they were to possess! how great must have been their delight at the beautiful fruit! how impatient their desire to enter and to enjoy so favoured a land! But the account they heard was not altogether cheering. A beautiful country, truly, said the spies, and a land that flows with milk and honey, but a country with strong cities inhabited by formidable men, among whom was the fierce race of giants, the terrible sons of Anak. Not a province but what was occupied by warlike tribes, the Amalekites in the north, the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites in the mountain passes, and the Canaanites in the plains and on the banks of the Jordan.

54. MURMURING OF THE PEOPLE AND THEIR PUNISHMENT.

[Numb. XIV.]

The people's hearts sank within them; they felt unable to encounter such powerful foes; but Caleb, wishing to inspire them with hope and fortitude, exclaimed: "Let us go up and possess it at once, we are well able to overcome them." Alas! his cowardly companions would not hear of encouragement; they began to exaggerate the danger: "The land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eats up its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in

it are men of great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, who come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." — The Israelites, overpowered with anguish and dismay, wept and murmured bitterly, asking, wherefore they had left Egypt to die in the wilderness, or to be killed by the sword of invincible foes? They upbraided Moses and Aaron, and proposed in their blind folly to choose a captain who might lead them back into Egypt.

It was a severe trial for Moses despite his meek and gentle spirit. Joshua and Caleb felt the urgency of the occasion. With all outward signs of mourning and grief, with their garments rent, they appeared before the people, and said firmly: "The land which we searched is an exceedingly good land: if the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land; for they are bread for us, their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us, fear them not: only do not rebel."

The infuriated multitude rushed upon the men who, in the strength of their faith, had spoken so boldly, and prepared to stone them to death. At that dangerous moment, the glory of the Lord appeared before the Israelites, and His voice declared to Moses, that as a punishment for their disbelief and revolt, the people should be smitten with pestilence and die, and from Moses alone should descend a great and mighty nation, bearing God's name and spreading His truth. But Moses entreated God to forgive them: "And now, I beseech Thee, let the power of my God be great, according as Thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is longsuffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children into the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of Thy mercy, and

as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said: I pardon according to thy word. But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men who have seen My glory, and My miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted Me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to My voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it; but My servant Caleb, because he has another spirit within him, and has followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went, and his seed shall possess it." — During forty years the Hebrews were to lead a wandering life in the desert, one year for each day spent by the spies in their journey of exploration; to their children was reserved the conquest of the land which they themselves dreaded so much, and where should be the home of their prophets, the cradle of their warriors, the throne of their kings: of all their vast hosts, Joshua and Caleb alone, the brave-hearted and loyal followers of Moses, were to be permitted to enter the land of Promise.

The people repented of their sinful want of faith, and mourned in deep affliction; they were eager and almost impetuous in proving their valour, and demanded to be led on to the conquest of Canaan. But Moses said, "Wherefore now do you transgress the commandment of the Lord? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you; that you be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword." But they were unable to moderate their ardour. As they rushed madly forward, they were overpowered by the fierce and hostile tribes, scattered, and pursued southward to the old Canaanite town Hormah.

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55. REBELLION OF KORAH AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

[Numb. XVI.]

Faith in God, and submission to His servant Moses, were lessons which the Israelites seemed unable to learn. This was again strikingly proved by the rebellion of Korah and his associates, which followed almost immediately after the events just narrated, and was attended with terrible punishments.

Korah was of the race of Levi; he was indeed also descended from Kohath, like Moses and Aaron, but not through Amram, but through his younger brother Izhar; and it was to the elder line of Amram — to Aaron and his descendants — that the right of priesthood had been exclusively assigned. Now Korah was an aspiring and ambitious man. He would not acknowledge the superior gifts of Moses and Aaron. Belonging to the tribe of Levi, he believed himself entitled to the highest sacerdotal privileges. He succeeded in gaining the co-operation of some other men, as Dathan and Abiram, who, being members of the *eldest* tribe, considered themselves wronged by their exclusion from the sacred offices, to which they believed they had a natural claim. They were joined by a number of discontented Israelites, men of wealth and influence, who bore unwillingly the civil authority of Moses, which enforced order and obedience from all alike. Filled with a bitter spirit of jealousy, they exclaimed: "You take too much upon you; for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then do you lift yourselves up above the congregation of the Lord?" When Moses heard their complaints, he fell down upon his face, conscious of his own humbleness. Then, as if inspired by Divine counsel, he said to Korah and all those who had joined him: "Indeed

to-morrow the Lord will show who are His, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself: him whom He has chosen will He bring near to Himself." Then he commanded them to take censers, to fill them with fire, and to offer incense in them on the next day, when God would make manifest His will. And then, turning more particularly to Korah, he addressed him thus: "Hear me, you sons of Levi, does it seem a small thing to you, that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel to bring you near to Himself to do the service of the Tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them? And He has brought thee near to Himself and all thy brethren, the sons of Levi, with thee: and must you seek the priesthood also?" Lastly he summoned Dathan and Abiram before him; but they refused to appear, sending the insolent answer: "Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that flows with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that flows with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up." Moses, deeply grieved and mortified, poured out his prayer before God: "Respect not Thou their offering; I have not taken one ass from them, nor have I hurt one of them." — On the following morning, Korah and his mutinous companions assembled before the Tabernacle, each bearing in his hand a censer filled with incense. They were joined by Moses and Aaron. The glory of the Lord shone before the congregation, and He said to the two brothers: "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." But they fell down upon their faces and exclaimed: "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt Thou be wroth with all the congregation?"

God listened to this fervent appeal, and He bid them command the children of Israel to stand aloof from the tents of Korah and of Dathan and Abiram, lest "they be consumed by all the sins" of "these wicked men." — Then Moses proclaimed in a loud voice: "Hereby you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works, and that I have not done them of my own mind: if these men die the common death of all men, or if they be punished with the punishment of all men, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord makes a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth, and swallows them up, with all that appertain to them, and if they go down alive into the pit; then shall you understand that these men have provoked the Lord." And the Biblical narrative continues: "And the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men, that appertained to Korah, and all their goods; they and all that appertained to them went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. . . . And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense."

The people, seized with consternation and horror, sought to flee among the din of clamouring voices; for they were afraid, that the earth would devour them all. — Then the censers of the rebellious sinners were, by the command of God, collected together, and, being beaten flat, employed for a covering of the altar; they were thus preserved as eternal witnesses of the crime and its terrible punishment; or, as the sacred historian observes, "to be a memorial to the children of Israel, that no stranger who is not of the seed of Aaron, shall come near to offer incense before the Lord, lest he be as Korah and as his company." — But on the morrow the people's indignation burst forth anew, they complained that Moses and Aaron had killed their brethren, and once more

they rose up in revolt. — The Lord punished them with a terrible plague, smiting more than fourteen thousand of the Israelites. Aaron, by the request of Moses, entreated the pardon of God, and purified the people by an incense-offering; and then the plague was stayed.

56. THE BLOOMING ROD OF AARON.

[Numb. XVII.]

The authority of Aaron as High-priest and as the spiritual mediator between God and Israel, was to be openly manifested and confirmed by a striking sign; in order that his supremacy might for ever be secured and recognised. — Each tribe was commanded to bring one rod inscribed with its name; that of the tribe of Levi was to bear the name of Aaron. The rods were given to Moses, who took them into the Tabernacle: now the tribe whose rod would blossom and bud, was to be considered as specially elected and favoured by God. And the Bible narrates: "It came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the Tabernacle, and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. . . . . And the Lord said to Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the Testimony to be kept for a token against the rebels; that thou mayest silence their murmurings before Me, lest they die."

57. WATER FROM THE ROCK.

[Numb. XX.]

It will be remembered that during the events just related the Israelites were encamped at Kadesh, a city lying in a mountain defile which leads in a direct line into Canaan. This is one of the dreariest and most sterile approaches to the Holy Land, at the extreme south of Judea, from which it is shut off by towering crags and rocky heights.

Now in this wild and desolate country, the Israelites suffered grievously from want of water. As usual, they appealed to Moses and Aaron, upbraiding them severely: "Why have you brought us into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? This is an evil place, no place of seed or of figs, or of vines or of pomegranates, nor is there water to drink." Moses prayed to God, and received comfort; yet his faith wavered; like Aaron, he doubted the word or the power of the Lord. Yet he was prepared to do His bidding. He called the whole congregation together, and leading them to one of the numerous rocks round Kadesh, he exclaimed sternly: "Hear now, you rebels; must we obtain water for you out of this rock?" Then he lifted his staff, and smote the stone; and, behold, before the eyes of the amazed and delighted multitude, the water gushed forth in abundance, streaming down in a copious supply sufficient for man and beast. Moses and Aaron stood lost in shame and confusion; and the Lord said to them: "Because you did not believe Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." The place of this miraculous deed was called *Meribah*, or Strife, because "there the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and He was sanctified in them."

At Kadesh, Miriam died, the eldest of Jochebed's three children, the first Hebrew prophetess; and there, at the entrance to the Land of Promise, she was buried.

58. WANDERINGS CONTINUED.

[Numb. XX sqq.]

In order to advance from Kadesh straight into Canaan, the Hebrews had to pass through the territory of the Edomites. Moses sent messengers to their king, asking for permission

to travel through his land. Although the request was courteously and even imploringly framed, and although Moses pledged himself, that his hosts should strictly keep on the high or royal road, neither turning to the right nor to the left, touching neither fields nor vineyards, and fully paying for what they ate and drank; the king of Edom declined the proposal most fiercely; and in order to resist any attempt on the part of the Hebrews to enter by force, he at once set out against them with a numerous army. Moses deemed it prudent to avoid a conflict with so powerful an enemy, and led his people back south-eastward, till he encamped at Hor, a peak in the range of mount Seir, south of the famous Petra. That rugged station of the wandering Israelites became to them of peculiar interest by a melancholy event, the death of Aaron. The summons came to the servant of God, when he was 123 years old, and it was obeyed without a murmur. In the sight of all that congregation which had so often attacked him with complaints and murmurs and threats, and which, by constant revolts, had again and again tried his meek spirit, Aaron, accompanied by his brother Moses and his son Eleazar, ascended the mountain. Arriving on the top, Moses stripped the first High-priest of his splendid garments, and invested with them Eleazar, his successor in the holy office. What a view met his dying eyes! How strange must have been his emotions when he gazed around him! "He looked over the valley of Arabah, countersected by the hundred watercourses, and beyond over the white mountains of the wilderness, they had so long traversed, and at the northern edge of it there must have been visible the heights through which the Israelites had vainly attempted to force their way to the Promised Land. This was the western view. Close around him on the east were the rugged mountains of Edom, and far along the horizon the wide downs of Mount Seir, through which

the passage had been denied by the wild tribe of Esau who hunted over their long slopes". (*Stanley.*)

The news of Aaron's death spread grief and wailing in the Hebrew camp. "When all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel." With these few and simple words the Bible takes leave of the man who next to Moses had played the most important part in the events that preceded and followed the exodus from Egypt. He had been the mouth-piece of Moses, the eloquent speaker. He had been chosen as the spiritual intercessor between God and the people; he was appointed the chief of the nation of priests, and had been endowed with the spirit of God. Yet though truthful and dignified, his character lacked the manly firmness so essential in troubled times and among a fickle people. Though endeavouring to follow in the footsteps of his brother, he yielded, in critical moments, to the threats or entreaties of the infatuated multitude. He fades in grandeur beside the imposing figure of Moses.

When the days of mourning were over, the Israelites left their encampment and resumed their wanderings. Their object was now naturally to avoid the territory of the Edomites who had shown so hostile a disposition, and to penetrate into the Promised Land from the eastern side of the Jordan. What long and circuitous marches lay before them! But they had no choice, and therefore they first journeyed south-eastward, back in the direction of the Red Sea. No longer in view of the hills of Judah, but oppressed by the dismal and dreary sight of the wilderness, they had no hope or bright anticipation to cheer them on. Their courage and patience failed them. They murmured bitterly against Moses: "Wherefore hast thou brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water." As a punishment, the Lord sent fiery serpents,

from whose sting many of the people died. Then they repented, and implored Moses to entreat for pardon: he interceded, and his prayers were accepted by God. He was commanded to make a serpent of brass, and to place it upon a pole; any man bitten by a fiery serpent should look up to the brazen figure, as a symbol of his reliance on the Divine power and assistance; then he would be healed. And so the continuance of the calamity was averted.

Once more the Hebrew hosts went forth; they travelled southward till they reached Eziongeber on the shores of the Red Sea; then turning northward, but steadily keeping on the eastern side of Mount Seir, they passed along the border of the Arabian desert, halting at stations few of which have left a trace to prove their identity—Zalmonah and Punon, Oboth and Ije-abarim, Dibon-Gad and Almon-Diblathaim; they passed the plains of Moab, crossed the river Arnon, proceeded through the territory of the Ammonites, resting at *Beer* (Well), where the famous song was sung: "Spring up, o well, sing to it: The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver with their staves;" they halted at Mattanah, Nahaliel and Ramoth, at the mountain range of Abarim, at the ridge of the Pisgah, and encamped at one of its loftiest peaks, the Nebo, whence a fine and commanding prospect opened westward over the Jordan, reaching to the beautiful plains of Jericho and beyond them. The camp spread "along the Jordan from Beth-jesimoth to Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab."

59. CONQUESTS IN THE EAST OF THE JORDAN.

[Numb. XXI.]

When the Israelites had crossed the river Arnon, they found themselves in the very midst of the populous and powerful east-jordanic tribes, whose land they knew they would have to wrest from them inch by inch. These nations prepared for attack and defence, and trusting in their idols Baal and Ashtarte, Chemosh and Moloch, mocked the God, and despised the invading hosts, of the Hebrews. The first hostile people they had to encounter were the Amorites, whose valiant king Sihon resided in Heshbon. Sihon had before distinguished himself by remarkable feats of bravery and daring; he had conquered all the land north of the Arnon, had driven back the Moabites southward beyond this river, and had firmly established his empire. When, therefore, the Hebrews sent messengers to him, praying to be allowed to pass through his dominions, under the same conditions they had proposed to the Edomites, he haughtily and contemptuously refused the request, as the king of Edom had done before, and like him he marched out against them with a large army. At Jahaz, on the borders of the desert, a sanguinary battle was fought, in which Sihon was utterly routed. The Hebrews took possession of the whole country between the Arnon and the more northern river Jabbok, leaving, however, untouched the territory of the Ammonites whose abodes lay also between those two rivers. These deeds were celebrated in heroic songs, and lived long in the mouth of the Hebrews; a fragment of such a lay has fortunately been preserved to us:

"Come into Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and prepared: for there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon; it has consumed Ar of Moab, and the lords of the high places of Arnon. Woe to thee Moab!

thou art undone, o people of Chemosh! he has given his sons that escaped, and his daughters, into captivity to Sihon king of the Amorites. We have shot at them; Heshbon has perished even to Dibon, and we have laid them waste even to Nophah, which reaches to Medeba."

Other conquests in the same districts were now easily accomplished; but Og, the powerful king of the fertile land of Bashan, offered an obstinate resistance. Og was indeed a formidable foe. He ruled over a large country with many fortified cities stretching northward to the foot of the Hermon, and eastward to the regions of the Euphrates. He descended from the giant race of the Rephaim, and was of huge stature. He at once marched out to meet the Hebrews at Edrei, one of his principal towns. But God said to Moses: "Fear him not; for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his country, into thy hand, and thou shalt do to them as thou didst to Sihon, king of the Amorites." The Hebrews, thus encouraged, advanced boldly, and were victorious; "and they smote Og, and his sons, and all his people, until there was none of them left alive, and they took possession of his land." It is a tale of bloodshed on which we do not care to dwell; carnage and extermination marked each advancing step of the conquering Hebrews: thus only could the promises given to them and to their ancestors be fulfilled.

60. BALAAM'S PROPHECIES.

[Numb. XXII—XXIV.]

The Israelites now pitched their camp once more in the south-eastern plains of the Jordan. Balak, the king of Moab, had seen the defeat of two of his most powerful neighbours, and he trembled at the approach of the apparently invin-

cible invaders. Might he not be the next to feel their impetuous attack? He tried to effect an alliance with the adjoining Midianites, whose apprehension it was not difficult to rouse: "Now will this host," he said to them, "devour all that are around us, as the ox devours the grass of the field."

He bethought himself, besides, of another device. At that time, a heathen prophet, Balaam, the son of Beor, who lived in Pethur, a town on the Euphrates, was famous for his wisdom and his inspired speeches prompted by Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews. To him Balak sent distinguished men from Moab and Midian with presents, and with this message: "Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt, they cover the face of the earth, and they encamp over against me. Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me; perhaps I shall prevail that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." The men arrived and delivered their message. Balaam begged them to stay over night in his house, and to hear his answer on the morrow. During that night, the Lord appeared to Balaam in a vision, and said: "Thou shalt not go with these messengers; thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed." On the following morning, therefore, he declared to his guests, that he would not go with them. On their return home, Balak, in no way discouraged, sent out to Balaam other and even more eminent men with his former request. But the heathen seer replied: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Yet he invited the strangers to remain with him till the following day. In the night, the Lord appeared to him again in a vision, and this time He bade him go with the messengers, but

speak no words but those which He would command him. So then on the morning the prophet saddled his ass, and declared himself ready to accompany the men to Moab.

Now followed an event so remarkable and marvellous that we can only insert it in the very words of Scripture:

"And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the Lord placed himself in the way to oppose him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field; and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. But the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path of the vineyards, a wall being on the one side, and a wall on the other side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she pressed herself against the wall, and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again. And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no room to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with the staff. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said to Balaam, What have I done to thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said to the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I wish there were a sword in my hand, for then would I kill thee. And the ass said to Balaam, Am I not thy ass upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so to thee? And he said, No. Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed his head, and fell down upon his face. And the angel of the Lord said to him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thy ass these three times? Behold, I went out

to oppose thee, because thy way is pernicious before me; and the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely I should then have slain thee, and saved her alive. And Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: and now, if it displease thee, I will return home. And the angel of the Lord said to Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak to thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak."

When the king heard of Balaam's arrival, he went out to meet him at the northern boundary of his dominions, and received him with the words: "Did I not earnestly send to thee, wherefore didst thou not come to me? am I not able to promote thee to honour?" To which Balaam replied, that he had now indeed come to the king, but was unable to speak anything but what God would put into his mind.

On the morrow, Balak took the prophet up to the heights sacred to Baal, and there they built seven altars, upon each of which they sacrificed an ox and a ram. Then Balaam went alone to a solitary place, hoping to receive the word of the Lord. When he returned to the king, he had beheld the vision, and he felt inspired. He stood near his burnt-offering before Balak and the princes of Moab, and, urged by an irresistible impulse, he broke forth in these sublime utterances: "Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? or how shall I defy whom the Lord has not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people that dwells alone, and does not reckon itself among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the

fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

Balak was struck with dismay at this speech, and exclaimed, "What hast thou done to me? I took thee to curse my enemies, and, behold, thou hast indeed blessed them." Balaam repeated, that the words were not his own but the Lord's. Then Balak insisted that he should accompany him to the heights of Pisgah, whence he could see a portion of the Hebrew encampment, and urged him now at least to call down evil upon the ruthless invaders. Again the sacrifices were offered up, and Balaam received in lonely communion the bidding of the Lord. When he returned, he was eagerly surrounded by the king and the people, and he spoke:

"Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken to me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent; has He said, and shall He not do it? or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good? Behold, I have received commandments to bless, and He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He does not behold iniquity in Jacob, nor does He see perverseness in Israel; the Lord his God is with him, and the trumpet-blowing of his king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt, as with the swiftness of the buffalo. Surely, no enchantment prevails against Jacob, nor divination against Israel: in the right time it is revealed to Jacob and to Israel, what God does. Behold, the people rises up like a great lion, and lifts itself up as a young lion: it does not lie down, until it has consumed the prey, and has drunk the blood of the slain."

As Balaam ended, Balak exclaimed in dread, "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all." But Balaam answered humbly, "All that the Lord speaks that must I do."

The king resolved to make another trial; he took the seer up to the heights of Peor, which solemnly rise over the

endless desert, and there caused seven altars to be built, and the sacrifices to be offered as before. Balaam, now satisfied that God wished him to bless and not to curse Israel, no more sought the solitude for a Divine inspiration; but when he looked down, and beheld the brilliant hangings of the Tabernacle, and round it, in vast circles, the spreading tents of the Israelites, he burst forth into enthusiastic praise:

"The speech of Balaam, the son of Beor, and the speech of the man whose eyes are open, the speech of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who is prostrated, but has his eyes open: How goodly are thy tents, o Jacob, and thy tabernacles, o Israel! As valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of aloes which the Lord has planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. He pours the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he has the swiftness of the buffalo: he consumes the nations, his enemies, and crushes their bones, and pierces them through with his arrows. He couches, he lies down as a lion and as a lioness, who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesses thee, and cursed is he that curses thee."

Balak's anger was now kindled almost to rage; he upbraided the prophet, and ordered him in disgrace from his presence; but Balaam had more terrible things to reveal; he bid the king stay, to hear what the strange invading nation would do to him and to the neighbouring tribes. And he took up his parable, and said:

"Speech of Balaam, the son of Beor, and speech of the man whose eyes are open, speech of him who hears the words of God, and knows the 'knowledge' of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who is prostrated, but has his eyes open: I see him, but not now; I behold him, but

not nigh—there shall come forth a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of the tumult. And Edom shall be a possession for his enemies, and Israel shall act valiantly. And he that comes out of Jacob shall rule and shall destroy those that escape from the cities."

Then, after adding a few words about the Amalekites, the Kenites, and the Phoenicians, Balaam departed to return to his home, and the king followed, oppressed by gloomy forebodings.

The Hebrews now resumed their military expeditions, and next turned against the Midianites. Twelve thousand chosen men attacked the hostile army headed by five kings of Midian, and accompanied by Balaam. They routed the army, killed the five kings and the prophet, burnt the towns, made the women and children captives, and seized a vast amount of spoil, which they brought into the Hebrew camp near the Jordan, for equal distribution among the warriors, the congregation, and the priests.

61. NEW CENSUS AND ALLOTMENT OF THE EAST-JORDANIC LAND.

[Numb. XXV. XXVI. XXXII.]

A census of the men above 20 years was instituted in the plains of Moab, and gave the number of 601,730. "But among these there was not a man of those whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."

Large districts in the east of the Jordan consisted chiefly of pasture lands most valuable for shepherd tribes.

When the Israelites had conquered from Sihon and Og extensive tracts of such land, together with walled cities and deep wells, the tribes of Reuben and Gad and a great portion of the Manassites, who were particularly rich in cattle, desired to settle there permanently. They made their request to Moses and to the High-priest Eleazar. But Moses replied severely: "Shall your brethren go to war, and shall you sit here?" Then he bid them remember how the cowardice of the scouts that had been sent from Kadesh to Eshkol, had called down the Lord's anger, who declared that the whole generation should perish in the wilderness without entering the Promised Land. The men, however, had no intention to desert their brethren; after building sheepfolds for their cattle, and houses for their children, they wished to go with the Hebrew army over the Jordan, and to assist in the conquest of the land; and not before that conquest was completed, would they return to their eastern possessions. — Moses expressed himself satisfied with this declaration and pledge, and assigned to Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh, the beautiful provinces which they claimed.

62. DEATH AND CHARACTER OF MOSES.

[Deuteron. I sqq.]

The nation of wanderers lay encamped in the districts of Moab, with the rugged mountain fastnesses rising around them, with the distant prospect of plains and fields where herds of cattle were grazing, near the oaks of Bashan and the fenced cities which now belonged to them and their children.

The prophet stood at the door of the Tabernacle, encompassed by the glory of God. The people, all gathered about their tents, were awaiting his word. They were resting from their victory over the Midianites, and prepared

to cross the Jordan for the occupation of Canaan. They had swept the enemies from their path, and had now no fear of the mighty children of Anak. In the desert, a new generation of sturdy warriors had sprung up, who had never felt the bondage, and had never seen the wealth and luxury, of Egypt. But Moses, no more than his brother Aaron, was permitted to enter the Promised Land; he was to die on its very borders. He had once doubted the word of the Lord at the rock of Meribah, and in spite of his habitual faith and obedience, he was to suffer a bitter punishment. He neither murmured nor repined; he had fulfilled his appointed task, he left the rest to the Lord. He was 120 years old, but his eye was not dim, his strength had not abated. He was still a general ready to lead forth his people to battle, and a judge administering justice to all. Filled with the spirit of God, he assembled the children of Israel in their encampment at the foot of Mount Pisgah, and in solemn and touching words recalled to them the incidents of their miraculous deliverance, from their flight out of Egypt down to the recent warfare with the powerful desert tribes. Intending the address as his farewell to the people on the very eve of their triumph, he interwove with it a repetition of the Ten Commandments and of many of the important laws, together with impressive appeals to faith and piety. He bid the people remember that it was through the Lord alone that they had been delivered out of Egypt; He had chosen them to hand down the revealed truth from generation to generation, and to diffuse it throughout the earth. They were to possess Canaan not on account of their own righteousness, for they had ever been sinful and disobedient, but by the grace and mercy of God. But they must preserve their faith pure and undefiled, abhorring and keeping aloof from every form and manner of idolatry. All images found in the land of Canaan were to be destroyed, all groves and temples dedicated to

false gods to be hewn down, all idolatrous nations shunned and exterminated. Should any one of the children of Israel turn to idolatry, no pity was to be shown to him; he should be stoned to death by the congregation; for Moses knew too well the weakness and levity of the people.

Then followed a powerful exhortation to obedience. It seemed as if the great prophet had divined the days of peril and tribulation which the Israelites later called down upon themselves; as if it was given to him to see into the distant future fraught with sorrow and suffering. In forcible and soul-stirring words he tried to impress his hearers with the great principles of the new creed proclaimed by him: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him." But if they should forsake their God, if they should follow in the evil ways of other nations, then dire punishment would assuredly follow: "The Lord shall scatter you among the nations, you shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you." Yet even in this gloom and misery, they should not be without hope: "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

From the mountain heights, Moses looked towards the Promised Land, which was so soon to be in the hands of the Israelites: can we listen unmoved to his minute description of it? "The Lord thy God brings thee into a goodly land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates, a land of oil, olive, and honey, a land wherein thou shalt eat without scarceness; thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. For the land whither thou goest, is not as the land of Egypt from whence you came out, where thou didst sow thy seed and water it with thy foot as a garden of herbs:

but the land whither you go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinks water of the rain of heaven."

The religious and civil precepts dwelt upon by Moses in his long discourse, are mainly those previously enjoined, but they include also a new law, that concerning the future election of a king. He foresaw that the Israelites, so prone to follow the example of surrounding nations, would doubtless wish for a supreme ruler or monarch, and he desired to guide their choice for their national welfare. "He shall be one," he said, "whom the Lord shall choose, one from among thy brethren shalt thou make king over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee who is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, in order to multiply horses; for the Lord has said to you, You shall henceforth no more return that way. Nor shall he take many wives, that his heart may not turn away, nor shall he amass silver and gold. And it shall be, when he sits upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this Law out of the book which is before the priests the Levites."

Pursuing his appeal, Moses set before the people the blessing and prosperity they would enjoy if they were obedient to the Divine injunctions. "For this commandment," so ran the words of Moses, "which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us and bring it us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh to thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." — And on the other hand, Moses unfolded an awful picture of the disasters and calamities that would befall them if they

disobeyed the Lord — how they would be persecuted and besieged and driven to unheard-of misery, perish by war, and famine, and pestilence; and how they would finally be captured and scattered, and led as bondmen into a distant land by fierce and merciless foes: ". . . Thou shalt serve thy enemies whom the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and He shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until He has destroyed thee. The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young . . . . Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sickness. . . ."

Terrible as these threats and predictions appear, they foreshadowed a reality more terrible still, that fell upon the Hebrews in the fulness of time, when the measure of their sins was complete. But the pious man of God did not cease without giving hope and consolation; he declared that the people had it in their own hand to avert so awful a fate, and that the mercy of God was ever ready to assist them: "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God has driven thee, and shalt return to the Lord thy God, and shalt obey His voice according to all that I commanded thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thy heart and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn the captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will restore and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God has scattered thee."

Then Moses called Joshua, the brave, true-hearted warrior, who had before been solemnly appointed his successor in the leadership of Israel, and he spoke to him in the presence of the whole congregation: "Be strong and of good courage, for thou shalt come with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, He it is that goes before thee, He will be with thee, He will not fail thee nor foresake thee, fear not, neither be discouraged."

The grand and sublime charge which Moses, at the foreboding of his death, addressed to the chosen nation, ended with a magnificent song, surveying in one soaring flight the past and the future, uttering rebuke and comfort, dwelling on the destinies of the Hebrews and of their enemies — a fitting conclusion to a noble and fervent admonition: in it appears, intensified and enhanced, the old poetic enthusiasm that had once been kindled at the first feeling of victory and liberty. It was bequeathed to the children of Israel as a precious heirloom; it remains as one of the unsurpassed master-pieces of Hebrew poetry; its fire, force, and beauty can hardly be rendered by any translation; it must be read and appreciated in the original tongue so peculiarly adapted for sublime and prophetic utterance.

And then, as if he could never satisfy the love of his own heart, as if, like a dying father surrounded by his children, he could never give enough of his advice and warning and blessing, he added another poetic address in which he delineated the future destinies of the twelve tribes. As an historical document it is of the utmost value; it recalls to mind the last speech of Jacob to his sons, and invites a comparison which instructively proves the changes that had gradually been wrought in the relative position of the tribes. Let one instance suffice, that of Levi. — In the

address of Jacob, Levi is spoken of in the following terms, which amount to a denunciation and a menace:

"Simeon and Levi are brethren,
An instrument of violence is their burning rage.
Into their council my soul shall not come,
In their assembly my glory shall not join:
For in their anger they slew men,
And in their self-will they hamstrung oxen.
Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce,
And their wrath, for it is cruel:
I will disperse them in Jacob,
And scatter them in Israel."

Now let us hear the language of Moses:

"And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy Holy One, whom thou hast proved at Massah, and with whom thou hast striven at the waters of Meribah; who said to his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; nor did he acknowledge his brothers, nor knew his own children: for they have observed Thy word, and kept Thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob Thy judgments, and Israel Thy Law; they shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt-sacrifice upon Thy altar. Bless, o Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of those that rise against him, and of those that hate him, so that they rise no more!"

Who does not see that here the Levites have attained that honoured and privileged condition which the laws of the Pentateuch so constantly claim for them?

Moses wound up his blessing with a final and pithy outburst comprising all his hopes and feelings of patriotic exaltation: "There is none like God, o Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven for thy help, and in His majesty upon the cloud. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath work His everlasting arms, and He thrusts out the enemy from be-

fore thee, and says, Destroy them! And Israel dwells in safety, alone; the eye of Jacob rests upon a land of corn and wine, and his heavens drop down dew. Happy art thou, o Israel: who is like thee, o people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy elevation? And thy enemies shall flatter thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

Then Moses left the children of Israel to return no more. By Divine command, he ascended the summit of Nebo in the mountain range of Pisgah: he looked over that varied and beautiful country which had been his beacon in the days of Egyptian slavery, the bright goal of the Israelites, tempting and encouraging them on through the pathless tracts of the wilderness. It seemed within his grasp; he glanced over the districts northward, and westward, and southward; he beheld the fine pasture land of Gilead and the oak forests of Bashan; he saw, on the other side of the Jordan, the plains of Naphtali, and Manasseh and Ephraim, down to the shores of the western sea; he enclosed in his eager survey the mountain passes of Judah, and the vale of the Jordan, and the Dead Sea, with Jericho, and Hebron, and Engedi, down to Zoar.

As he gazed upon the beautiful land, it faded from his sight, the shadows of death enfolded him — and the great prophet passed away into the presence of his God. No human eye saw his death, no human tongue could tell the place of his sepulchre.

"And there arose no other prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel."

It is impossible to read the account of the Israelites' wanderings in the desert, and of their first conquests in the east of the Jordan, without feeling our admiration, nay our reverence, for the character of Moses increasing step by step. He was the deliverer of the Hebrews, their legislator, their teacher, their judge, their general, the faithful servant, the favoured messenger of God. Undimmed by the mist of ages, his image stands before us in bright and clear outline. Round him are grouped all other figures distinguished in his time. The wonderful pictures left to us in the narrative of the Pentateuch, ever show his noble form pre-eminent. We are not confined to a faint and shadowy likeness; we see and hear the living man, in the full reality of his work and mission, in all the beauty of his meekness, in all his patience under bitter troubles—in faith and obedience sublime and all but perfect. From his cradle among the bulrushes down to his mysterious mountain tomb on the heights of Pisgah, his life seems to have been directed and guided by a miraculous hand. Born of Hebrew parents in a time of danger and oppression, and in a country marked above all others by idolatry and hatred of the stranger, wondrously saved from a cruel death, adopted by the daughter of a mighty king, nurtured in an Egyptian palace, Moses might seem like the hero of some fanciful legend. But more ordinary and more human features intermixed with the wonderful, prove the reality of the story. We read how with a generous and unabating love for his unhappy brethren, with a quick feeling for the wronged and the oppressed, Moses avenged an ill-treated Hebrew, and thus forfeited a life of peace and luxury at the court of Pharaoh. Escaping to Midian, he appears here also, and on his very arrival, as a protector of the weak against the strong. Though soon finding a home and domestic happiness in the house of the wise shepherd priest Jethro, he never forgot the misery of his distant

brethren, and the high destinies of the Hebrews, the descendants of Abraham and the inheritors of his glorious promises. In those wild and deserted tracts, where nature assumes a grander and more imposing aspect than in the flat and sandy plains of Egypt, Moses communed for the first time with the Lord. The bush burning with the fire of heaven, and the voice of the angel coming to the solitary shepherd, awakened his heart to the feeling that he had a special mission to fulfil. But his modesty and humility blunted his courage; he could not believe that he was elected for so grand a purpose. This struggle between his timid diffidence and his faith recurred, in many forms, throughout his life; it reveals a soul stirred by Divine aspirations, but checked by the consciousness of its human weakness. When the ten fearful plagues spread terror and ruin over Egypt, though constantly prominent before the king and the people, he desired to be no more than a frail and weak instrument in the hand of God, announcing His will and executing His decrees, without personal ambition, without seeking honour for himself. And what grand proportions did his figure attain at the wonderful times of the exodus! His courage, his prudence, his military skill were equal even to so great and extraordinary an emergency. Combining shrewdness and valour, he defied the watchfulness of the Egyptians, and enhanced the confidence of the Hebrews, whose great model and trusty guide he thenceforth became. When the pursuing enemies, with their swift horses and proud chariots, had found their graves in the Red Sea, the military leader proved a sublime poet; pious gratitude inspired him with a hymn of praise of singular force and beauty. And when during the forty weary years of wandering in the desert, the people, rebellious and discontented, overwhelmed him with taunting and upbraiding words, when they basely longed to return to the ignominy of Egyptian serfdom,

when sickness and death wasted their numbers, when they were slain by the enemy's sword, by terrible plagues, and heaven-sent fire, he never faltered, remaining true to his mission, obedient to his God: distrustful of himself, he prayed for the people, interceded for them, forgave their recklessness and their jealousy, taught, led, and judged them, strengthened their hope, and loved them with a never failing love. When they desponded, he raised their courage; when they revolted, he brought them back to God. He in whose soul burnt the fire of a consuming passion, who in a moment of wrath could dash to pieces the tablets received from God, when the degrading sight of the people's idolatry filled him with horror and agony, was yet the meekest of all men who ever lived on earth.

IV. THE TIME OF JOSHUA.

[Joshua I—XXIV.]

63. CAPTURE AND DESTRUCTION OF JERICHO.

[Joshua I—VII.]

Joshua, the friend and devoted assistant of Moses, had been prepared for his important and difficult mission by receiving the Divine spirit that had worked so manifestly in his great master. He was essentially a bold and martial man, eager for conquest, courageous in the battle-field, and scrupulous in faith and pious obedience. His strong arm never wearied, his energy and promptitude never failed. His very name *Jeho-shuah*, "God is my help", might have been his war-cry when he burst with irresistible vehemence on his heathen enemies. Upon him devolved the difficult task of wresting the land of Palestine from its ancient possessors, and of portioning it out among the chosen people. Cities had to be captured or razed to the ground, and populations to be exterminated, before the Israelites could occupy the narrow strip of land between the river of Egypt and the range of the Lebanon, including the rugged hills of Judah and the blooming plains of Samaria; though the ambition and bravery of later chiefs and leaders extended the domin-

ions considerably eastward towards the regions of the Euphrates.

When the thirty days of mourning for Moses had expired, Joshua sent two spies from the camp at Shittim westward over the Jordan, in order to explore the adjacent country, and especially the neighbourhood round Jericho and this important town itself. The men went, and came to the house of Rahab which bordered on the wall of the city. When the news reached the king of Jericho, who had doubtlessly watched the movements of the invading hosts with great anxiety, he at once sent to the woman and bid her give up the two strangers. But Rahab, whether foreseeing the great triumphs of the Hebrews, or fearing their God, was determined to save the lives of her guests by strategem. She hid them on the broad roof of her house amongst the stalks of flax which she had there piled up, and when the king's messengers came, she told them that the men had left her at dusk, and had departed from the city, she did not know whither. "Pursue after them quickly," she urged eagerly, "for you shall surely overtake them." Away sped the messengers to the fords towards the Jordan. Then Rahab went up to the men to the roof of the house, and entreated them thus: "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that your terror has fallen upon us and that all the inhabitants of the land tremble before you. For we have heard, how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts melted, nor did there remain any courage in any man on account of you: for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath. Now therefore, I pray you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown

you kindness, that you will also show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token; and that you will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brothers, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death." — The men pledged themselves faithfully to remember her and her household. Then Rahab let them down by a cord from the window, over the wall of the city, and bid them hide in the mountains for three days, in order to elude their pursuers. The men, before leaving her, desired her to tie a scarlet thread in her window, so that the conquerors should know and respect her house, into which she was to assemble her whole family, lest any member of it should unwittingly be injured. Rahab promised to do so, and the men cautiously departed. When they returned to Joshua, it was with the joyful and confident intelligence, "Truly, the Lord has delivered into our hands all the land, for all the inhabitants of the land tremble before us."

The time for marching forth had now arrived; the camp was broken up; and the Ark of the Covenant was borne aloft by the priests, and preceded the congregation at a considerable distance, guiding and encouraging them. Joshua proclaimed on that day: "Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you." They were to pass over the waters of the Jordan as miraculously as their fathers had passed through the waves of the Red Sea. It was harvest time, and the river was swollen, overflowing its banks everywhere. The priests advanced with their sacred burden, and as the soles of their feet touched the bed of the river, suddenly "the waters which came down from above, stood and rose up like a wall . . . and those that came down towards the plain, the Salt-Sea, failed and were cut off." Thus the river-bed was dry, and the priests stood in the midst of the Jordan, whilst the whole nation passed over. Now the Lord commanded Jo-

shua to call one man from each of the twelve tribes, and to bid each man put a stone in the midst of the Jordan, on the spot where the feet of the priests had rested, as an eternal memorial of the wonders they had just witnessed. When the twelve stones were placed, and the people had passed over, Joshua commanded the priests to follow the rest from out of the river-bed. As their feet reached the bank, the waters rushed back, overflowing the sides as they had done before. The people gazed with reverential awe upon Joshua, and they feared him as they had feared Moses.

The Israelite host encamped at Gilgal, about two miles south-east of Jericho, in full view of the stately city of the plain, in the shade of a great forest, near broad fields of golden corn, with the refreshing sound of numerous rivulets gladdening their ears. 40,000 warriors were to win that country of which Jericho was the key. Unlike their fathers, who had toiled and trembled so long in Egyptian bondage, they were men born in the desert, inured to hardships, anxious to battle with the foe, and steadily obedient to their leader. This band of Hebrew soldiers, ever ready for the march or the attack, has through successive ages been the model of all sternly resolute men, desperately resolved to cling to their faith, pitiless to their foes, unflinching in their determination.

At Gilgal, the rite of circumcision was enforced, which under the leadership of Moses had been neglected since the departure from Egypt; and the feast of Passover was celebrated, the people baking their unleavened cakes of the ripe corn of the country which they were soon to call their own. From that day the "heavenly bread", the manna, ceased to be their ordinary food.

Joshua was wandering without the camp of Gilgal, gazing perchance at the walled city of Jericho, when a

vision appeared to him. It was a warrior with a drawn sword. Joshua asked, it may be with secret misgiving, "Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" But the vision answered, "Nay, but as the Lord of hosts I come." Then Joshua fell on his face before the glory of the Lord thus suddenly revealed to him, and he said, "What says my Lord to His servant?" And he received the answer, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy."

The fall of Jericho was connected with extraordinary marvels and wonders. The conquest of the first Canaanitish city did not depend on the courage of the Hebrew warriors, or on the strategy of Joshua, but it was to be marked as the work of the Lord's own will and might. It was indeed calculated to terrify the heathens and to encourage the Hebrews. The Lord commanded Joshua to besiege the city. Its gates were shut, its walls closely watched; no one was allowed either to enter or to go out. The Hebrew army encompassed Jericho as with an iron grasp. For seven days the siege lasted: once on each day, the Ark of the Covenant was borne by the priests from the camp at Gilgal round the walls; seven priests preceded it, blowing a blast on their silver trumpets, and the armed men followed in solemn silence. On the seventh day, the Ark was carried round seven times, and at the seventh long blast of the trumpet, Joshua called out to the people, "Shout! for the Lord has given you the city." A great war-cry rose up into the air, the walls of Jericho fell down to the ground, and the Hebrew warriors rushed into the town. Then followed the work of destruction which sounds so terrible to our ears. The affrighted and panic-stricken people fell beneath the weapons of the invaders; even women and children were slain, old and young together, nor was the cattle spared. But the spies did not forget the promise they had made to

Rahab; they went into her house, brought her out with all her family, and led them safely to the camp. They alone of their whole race were allowed to dwell among the Hebrews. The city of Jericho was burnt; only the vessels of gold and silver, of brass and iron, were saved for the holy Tabernacle; and Joshua proclaimed publicly, "Cursed be the man before the Lord that raises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay the foundation thereof with his first-born, and with his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it."

64. CAPTURE OF AI AND STRATAGEM OF THE GIBEONITES.

[Josh. VIII. IX.]

The next point of Joshua's attack was the town of Ai, north-west of Jericho and south-east of Bethel, which was probably then a holy place of the Canaanites. He sent spies up to the mountains to explore the country, who seeing but few of the enemies, augured an easy victory for the Hebrews. Only three thousand men went up to the attack; but the people of Ai rushed furiously upon them, slaying some and driving the others back to the camp. It was the first signal defeat, and the Israelites were utterly dismayed. Joshua rent his clothes, and fell upon the ground before the Ark, praying to the Lord for help, and wailing bitterly in his despair. What hopes could the chosen people cherish? What glory would they bring to their God? — The voice of the Lord answering Joshua told him, that some of the devoted treasures of Jericho had been secretly appropriated by one of his soldiers, and that until the offender had been discovered and punished, the Hebrews would feel the Divine displeasure. Joshua then called all the people together, and announced the will of God. — On the following day, when the twelve

tribes were assembled, the trial by lot commenced; the tribe of Judah was taken, then the family of the Zarhites, then the household of Zabdi, and last of all the lot fell upon Achan. Joshua called out the disobedient man and said, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me." Achan did not attempt to conceal his sin, but confessed that he had taken from the spoil a valuable Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, and that he had hidden these things in and under his tent. Joshua's messengers found the objects as they were described, and brought them "before the Lord", that is, to the door of the Tabernacle. Then the whole congregation led Achan into the valley of Achor, with his sons and his daughters, and his oxen and his asses. There the men and beasts were stoned to death, and then burnt together with their tent and the spoil unlawfully taken at Jericho. A huge pile of stones was raised up over the remains, as a monument of the Lord's anger.

The city of Ai now fell an easy prey to the eager Israelites. It was to be taken by stratagem. Joshua divided his soldiers into two parts, sending the larger number by night to the mountains, westward of the town, on the road to Bethel, where they were to lie quietly in wait; whilst he himself at the head of the other part, encamped in a plain at the northern side of the town. When the king of Ai saw, in the morning, the advancing Hebrews, he summoned his soldiers and marched boldly out to meet the enemy. Joshua awaited their approach, and then suddenly, as if seized by a panic, turned round with his men, and fled in hot haste towards the desert. The heathen army pursued them exultingly, until they touched the sandy tracts of the desert. Joshua then raised his mighty spear, brandishing it

aloft; and when it was seen by the men lying in ambush in the west of Ai, they rushed, without check or obstacle, into the unguarded city, and set it on fire. When the pursuing hosts looked behind them, and beheld the rising flames, they were seized by a sudden fear. As they stopped, Joshua turned round upon them, forcing them back to the burning city. Here they were received and opposed by the Hebrew conquerors; thus they were hemmed in by the two armies of the Israelites; flight was impossible, and they fell beneath the sword of the invaders. — All the Hebrews now entered Ai, where they completed the work of carnage. They slew the inhabitants, but they took with them the cattle and the spoil. The king of Ai was hanged on a tree, and then thrown down before the gate, where the corpse was covered with a huge heap of stones.

After these fearful acts of devastation, Joshua and all the Israelites, the priests and the Levites carrying the Ark, journeyed northwards, probably through Shiloh to Mount Ebal. Here they built an altar to the Lord, and faithfully carried out the commands given by Moses: the Law was engraved on stones; then it was read to the whole congregation together with all strangers; and finally the blessings and the curses were recited from Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, in the exact manner previously enjoined.

Terror and consternation spread through the land of Palestine. Every king and chief prepared to do battle to the invader. Then a league was formed among the principal tribes: the Amorites, the Hittites, and the Hivites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, came from their hills and plains, and assembled to meet the common foe. But the town of Gibeon, lying to the west of Jericho, resolved to save itself by stratagem. There appeared one day in the camp of Gilgal, a party of men with ragged sacks slung across their asses, with leathern wine bottles, old,

rent, and bound up again; shoes torn and way-worn; garments dusty and faded; and their bread dry and mouldy. They had the appearance of people who had made a very long journey. They told Joshua that, having heard of the great wonders performed by the God of the Hebrews, they had travelled from their far distant homes to meet him, and had come to offer their allegiance, and to make a treaty with the Hebrews. As a sign of the truth of their words, they pointed to their tattered garments, and showed their dry provisions. Joshua, not doubting their words, concluded a league with them, promising to spare them in the general destruction. But soon after he was told that these very men belonged to a neighbouring tribe, and that Gibeon itself was one of their cities. Though indignant at their cunning, he adhered to the oath by which he had pledged himself, and he was supported in this course by the elders of the congregation. But the people murmured and insisted on the punishment of the impostors. Joshua calmed them by this decision: "We will let them live, but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water to all the congregation." Then summoning the men of Gibeon, he severely censured their deceitful artifice, and told them that, though he would secure their lives from the wrath of the Israelites, they must be servants, and the lowest menials at the Sanctuary for ever.

65. FURTHER CONQUESTS IN CANAAN.

[Josh. X—XII.]

The sincerity of Joshua's promise to protect the men of Gibeon was soon to be tested; for the neighbouring tribes, seized with fear and jealousy, leagued together to attack their city under the leadership of the king of Jerusalem. Five kings assembled their armies, those of Jebus, Hebron,

and Jarmuth, of Lachish and Eglon, all determined to punish the subservient and cowardly Gibeonites. At the report of their approach, the latter hastily despatched messengers to the camp at Gilgal, summoning the aid of Joshua: "Slack not thy hand from thy servants," was the entreaty, "and save us, and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains, are gathered together against us." Joshua answered readily to the cry of distress; he called out his warriors who had now proved themselves men of valour; in the night he marched from the camp at Gilgal, and soon stood before Gibeon like an avenging spirit. The shrill war-cry sounded and the armies closed. It was a terrible death-struggle, it was to be the crowning defeat of heathendom in Canaan. The battle began at day-break and lasted on throughout the day; at length, sorely pressed by Joshua, the allied armies turned and fled; they clambered up the rocky side of Bethhoron, and were pursued by Joshua over the steep mountain-passes, where they fell, slain by the sword of the Hebrews, or by the storm of heavy hailstones that descended from the sky.

This great battle at Gibeon was long famed in Hebrew history; it was the most important victory in the period of the conquest, for it established the power of the invading Israelites. It was told by the warriors to their lisping children; it was mentioned with awe as being supernaturally achieved; it was dwelt upon in the poetic chronicles of the nation; and referring to one of them, "the Book of the Righteous", the Bible narrates the event in the following terms:

"Then spoke Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still and the moon stayed until the people

had avenged themselves upon their enemies. . . So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel."

The five kings had fled southwards from the terrible arms of the Hebrews, and sought refuge in one of the mountain caves at Makkedah; but even there they found no safety. The place of their retreat was discovered, huge stones were rolled before the opening of the cave, which was strictly guarded, while the main army continued the pursuit of the enemies. When these were fairly routed and scattered, Joshua ordered the five kings to be brought before him. Then followed one of the terrible scenes too frequent in those times of hatred and confusion. The five captive monarchs were bidden to kneel down, and at Joshua's command, his chieftains and chosen warriors placed their feet on the necks of the kings as a sign of subjection. After undergoing this act of humiliation, the five kings were hanged, and finally thrown into the very cave which had been their last hiding place. Their kingdoms fell into the hands of the conquerors, who had now established a firm footing in Palestine. — Joshua then traversed the land with his sword and his spear; he made an easy conquest of Makkedah, Libnah, and Lachish, Gezer, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir, devastating the towns and their territory, and slaying the inhabitants; in a word, he smote "all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the low-lands. and all their kings; he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded;" for "the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel." Joshua's swift energy was untiring; it was not until he had conquered nearly the whole of the southern country, that he returned to the camp at Gilgal.

But the heathens ventured one more attempt to struggle against the advancing foe; and this attempt was made by one of the Canaanite chiefs dwelling in the northern part of the land. Jabin, king of Hazor, had heard of the unparalleled success of the invaders; and full of courage, he determined to stem their progress. He sent messengers to the valleys of the south, to the eastern hills, and to the kingdoms lying on the sea-coast. He summoned all the chiefs to meet him with their armies at the northern lake of Merom, the first through which the Jordan passes in its course from the heights of the Lebanon. A vast army answered the appeal; "they were like the sand that is upon the sea-shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many." They encamped at the waters of Merom, defiant in their strength, confident of victory. But like a flash of lightning, like a thunderbolt from heaven, Joshua, undaunted, and relying upon Divine assistance, appeared at the head of his warriors before the enemy's gigantic army: "and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them and chased them as far as great Zidon and Misrephoth-maim, and to the valley of Mizpah eastward; and they smote them until they left them none remaining."

A guerilla-warfare, occasionally assuming the proportions of great and regular battles, continued for many years even after the brilliant and decisive northern victory; but Joshua was everywhere successful; he subdued by untiring energy all the principal towns of Canaan, slew their kings and warlike populations, and enriched his army by their cattle and their spoil. We find thirty-one cities specially mentioned, and in every case the same stern and unsparing measures were carried out. These struggles lasted throughout the prime of Joshua's life, to the very verge of his old age: and yet many places and districts remained to be conquered — among them all the territory of the Philistines

and of Geshur, of the Avites, of the Giblites, and of all the Lebanon.

At last the Israelites began earnestly to long for peace; and the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh implored Joshua to be allowed to return to their wives and their children on the eastern side of the Jordan.

66. THE SETTLEMENT IN PALESTINE.

[Josh. XIII–XXII.]

But the land was first to be divided between the tribes of Israel. It was of small extent and comparatively narrow, about 190 miles long, and about 80 wide in the middle (varying from 10 to 15 in other parts), containing about 15,000,000 acres. On the eastern side, it stretched towards the great empires of the Euphrates and Tigris, the regions of magnificent despotism; on the west, it was bathed by the waters of the Mediterranean which connected it with the Grecian isles, the cradle of taste, learning, and philosophy; the southern boundary was that large tract of waste sand, which lay like a barrier between Palestine and Egypt, the land of idolatry and priestcraft; while to the north it reached to the high range of Lebanon, those tall mountain peaks which separated it from Syria. This small country was singularly endowed by nature; it could boast of rich pasture lands abundant enough to feed thousands of flocks and herds; it was rich in woods of oak and sycamore, in groves of pine and olive, in the stateliest cedar-forests, luxuriant vineyards, and blooming gardens. Its small compass embraced mountains and rocks, sea-coasts, lakes, and rivers, teeming valleys and breezy table-land, but also sandy wastes and stony deserts.

The equitable division of such a country was no easy task. The difficulty was evaded by leaving the issue to the

decision of the lot, which the Hebrews and other eastern nations believed to reveal the Divine will.

To the share of Judah, the lion of Israel, the most numerous of the tribes, fell one of the southern provinces of Palestine, bordered on the east by the shores of the Salt-sea up to the influx of the Jordan, on the west by the territory of the Philistines, and extending almost to the Mediterranean, on the south by the mountains and deserts of Edom, and on the north by the extensive plains of Dan and the blooming districts of Benjamin. It was a cool hill country, on whose rugged heights the warlike tribe could dwell in security. The high eminences were crowned with fenced cities, destined to become famed in after-ages. The valleys were rich in corn, and the mountain sides in vineyards. As to the luxuriant growth of the vine, it is only necessary to recall to mind Eshkol, the halting place of the spies sent by Moses, from where they brought back the colossal grapes. But the town of Hebron, associated with the name of the early patriarchs, though lying within the boundaries assigned to the tribe of Judah, was not to come into its exclusive possession; it was permitted as a residence to one man and his descendants for ever. Caleb, the tried and faithful servant of Moses and Joshua, asked for this beautiful spot as a reward of his long services. Joshua granted the request upon the condition that he would wrest it at the point of the sword from the giant race of the Enakim who still inhabited it. Caleb succeeded, and obtained his coveted prize. Southwest of Hebron lay Debir, or as it was anciently called Kirjath Sepher. Caleb, wishing to take it from the heathen and to annex it to his own territory, promised to give his daughter Achsah to the man who should win it. His own nephew Othniel came boldly forward, and the city of Debir was added to the possessions of Caleb. Thither he conducted his daughter,

who, however, apparently looking with apprehension on the sandy plain around the city, begged and obtained from her father the springs that were in the neighbourhood. But Jebus, the future Jerusalem, lying on impregnable heights, remained the stronghold of the Jebusites, who, like some less important populations, dwelt unhurt in the very midst of the land of Judah.

Next in importance to the tribe of Judah was that of Joseph; it had so much increased in influence and strength that it was divided into two branches, Ephraim and Manasseh, each sufficiently powerful to form an independent tribe. The Ephraimites especially grew in authority and weight; they received a portion of Palestine north of Judah, but separated from it by the provinces of Dan and Benjamin — the Jordan in the east, the Mediterranean in the west. It included the beautiful plain of Sharon; the old town of Shiloh, so long the home of the Tabernacle; Shechem, a second capital of Palestine, and almost forming its centre; and the famous mountains of Ebal and Gerizim, which were to give rise to rival sects. The men of Manasseh again separated in two parts; one division settled in the north of Ephraim, the other, as has been related, in the east of the Jordan, in the pasture lands of Gilead and Bashan.

The tribe of Ephraim, not contented with the districts at first allotted to it, demanded of Joshua more land: "Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, for the Lord has blessed me hitherto?" Joshua replied, "If thou be a great people, then go up to the wood country and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the Rephaim, if Mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee . . . The mountain shall be thine, for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down, and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the

Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong."

Five tribes had now received their territories—Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, Judah and Ephraim. Then Joshua summoned the whole nation to Shiloh to make arrangements for the allotment of abodes to the remaining tribes. Three men from each tribe were sent out to furnish an accurate account of all the land that had been conquered; and when they returned, lots were cast for its distribution. It was portioned out in the following manner. The tribe of Benjamin was closely hemmed in between Judah and Ephraim, but extending only about half-way between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, enclosing within its borders the holy town Bethel and the fertile plain of Jericho, Gilgal and Gibeon, Anathoth and Michmash and Ramah — all famous in later times. The western part of the intervening country, up to the coast, was assigned to the small tribe of Dan, perpetually threatened by the dangerous vicinity of the Philistines, whose cities Gath and Ekron were never conquered. To the tribe of Simeon was given the most southern part of Palestine, which lost itself in the wilderness of Kadesh, and which, by its very situation, as later by its political insignificance, was necessarily protected, if it was not absorbed, by Judah. It enclosed Beer-sheba, the southern boundary town of the land, once hallowed by Abraham's sojourn. At the extreme north, between Mount Lebanon, the Jordan, and the sea-coast with its Phoenician settlements, were domiciled side by side, and forming the northern barrier of the kingdom, the four tribes of Naphtali and Zebulon, Asher and Issachar, the two latter bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. Though the Levites were to have no connected territorial possessions in the land, they received for their maintenance forty-eight cities, four as a rule in every tribe, together with strips of land around each, as pastures for their cattle.

Thus the conquered land was portioned out in the new commonwealth of the Hebrews. A people of nomads was from that time to dwell in towns and villages, or to pitch their tents permanently in the forest land or the wide pasture plains. But in order to remind the nation that the entire country in reality belonged to the Lord, who had but temporarily granted it to His chosen people, it was, in every fiftieth year, reclaimed by Him; and then all the land that had within that period been sold or given up, was restored to the original proprietors or their heirs. Thus no tribe could enlarge its extent to the injury of other tribes; no one family could seriously disturb the virtual equality of all members of the community; there could neither be excessive wealth nor helpless poverty, neither despotism nor slavery.

When the land was fairly allotted amongst the tribes, Joshua permitted the men of Reuben, Gad, and a portion of Manasseh, to return to the transjordanic districts they had chosen. He blessed them, bid them depart rich with the spoils of the cities they had helped to conquer, but exhorted them: "Take diligent heed to do the commandment and the Law, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments, and to cling to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul." — Upon their arrival on the eastern side of the Jordan, they erected a great altar to the Lord. When the Israelites heard of it, their anger was kindled, and they resolved to march out against them with a large army; for they thought those eastern tribes guilty of rebellion against God and His Law, which severely forbids the offering of sacrifices at any altar except that of the common Sanctuary. But they sent first Phinehas, the High-priest, who should try to bring them back to obedience. This step prevented a

fratricidal war; the transjordanic tribes gave a satisfactory explanation: the altar had not been built by them for sacrifice or for public and private worship, but merely as a witness of their union with their brethren in the west of the Jordan, and as a means of securing to their descendants the privileges and the glory of belonging to the people of God. This account, given in good faith, was accepted, and the harmony of the tribes was happily preserved.

67. DEATH OF JOSHUA.

[Josh. XXIII. XXIV.]

Joshua's great task was now ended; he had led the people into Palestine, and had laid the foundations of the new commonwealth. The valiant soldier had worked unremittingly; he was advanced in years, and his rest was near at hand. Once more he summoned the Israelites, who assembled round him at Shechem to hear his parting words. Like Moses, Joshua impressed upon them faith in God, obedience to His Law, utter destruction of all idols, and separation from the idolators. He pointed out the dangers that still encompassed them; he added warningly, "As all good things are come upon you which the Lord has promised, so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, when you transgress the covenant of the Lord your God;" and with increasing force he concluded, "And if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Could the Israelites withstand an appeal so just and so earnest? They promised, no doubt with all sincerity: "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods." But how soon were they to prove faithless to their pledge!

To commemorate his last words, Joshua set up a stone pillar under the oak near the Sanctuary at Shechem. He died 110 years old, about B. C. 1450, and was buried in Timnath-Serah in Mount Ephraim, near Shechem. Within the boundaries of the same tribe, in Shechem, were deposited the bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought with them out of Egypt. Not long afterwards the High-priest Eleazar, the son of Aaron, died, and he was buried in a ground belonging to his family in Mount Ephraim.

Thus all the men who had witnessed the wonderful times of the deliverance from Egyptian bondage, passed away; but the memory of the great leader and lawgiver Moses lived among their descendants to cheer and to guide them on their difficult and dangerous path.

V. THE TIME OF THE JUDGES.

68. GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE PERIOD.

[Judg. I. II. XVII.–XXI.]

After the death of the brave Joshua followed a wild and lawless time, when "every man did that which seemed right in his own eyes." Joshua left no successor capable of ruling the entire nation by vigilance and energy, no one master spirit eager to grasp the sword and to continue the warfare with the heathen. The High-priest Phinehas who presided at the common Tabernacle in Shiloh, exercised only religious authority. Thus the nation divided itself into separate clans, each clustering round its own chieftain or leader. And yet the country was far from perfectly conquered; the Israelites were threatened by constant feuds and disturbances from the native inhabitants. Encircled by dauntless enemies, each tribe had to contend for its own safety or existence: often Judah dwelt in peaceful repose when the more northern tribes where fighting on the battle-field; and the latter rested from their labours when the warriors of Judah wrung Jebus from its old inhabitants. The Hebrew nation no longer marched out as one man "from Dan to Beer-sheba" to maintain the honour and the glory of the whole community; union in spirit and in action were want-

ing; nay jealousy or fierce violence led occasionally to strife and warfare between the tribes themselves.

Yet in times of great peril and distress, men of valour and intelligence usually arose to lead the Hebrew soldiers to battle and victory, and to conciliate by their authority the conflicting factions of the commonwealth. These men were "the Judges", a term which conveys but a partial idea of their duties and offices — namely those which they performed when their successful leadership against the enemy had restored peace. They were therefore not regularly appointed, nor did they follow each other in unbroken succession, but they were acknowledged in periods of exceptional difficulty, and then, when the danger had been overcome by their help, they naturally commanded the respect of the people, and were allowed to exercise supreme jurisdiction.

The different tribes carried on the war of conquest as best they could. Judah and Simeon joined each other, and defeated the Canaanites and Perizzites at Bezek, seizing and mutilating Adoni-bezek, the king; Judah next took and partially burnt Jerusalem, and then continued a successful expedition in the southern districts of the province and at the sea-coast, subduing the cities of Gaza, Askelon, and Ekron. The Ephraimites occupied the holy place Bethel; and the small tribe of Dan, finding itself molested by the Amorites, pressed northwards and took possession of the town Laish.

The account of this migration of the Danites is highly instructive, as it well illustrates the lawless character of the age. From Zorah and Eshtaol, two older possessions of the Danites in the central parts of the land, five men were sent as spies to the northern regions of the country. On their way, they came to the house of a certain Micah in Mount Ephraim, where he dwelt with his mother. He had

instituted in his house a private worship by means of an ephod and teraphim, of a graven and molten image. At first he made one of his sons priest at this domestic shrine; but when a young Levite, wandering about homeless and aimless, passed his house, he secured his services for a small allowance — ten shekels of silver and a suit of apparel annually, besides his food — and exclaimed with a glow of satisfaction, "Now I know that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to be my priest!" And yet the Law specially forbids all outward form of worship at any place except the Tabernacle, which was then at Shiloh!

When the five spies from Dan noticed the Levite in Micah's house, they requested him to consult the Divine oracle in their behalf; the answer was entirely encouraging: "Go in peace; before the Lord is your way wherein you go." The words of the Levite proved true; the men went on to Laish, saw that the town was easy of conquest, and the surrounding country rich and beautiful, and returned to their tribe with a most favourable report. Six hundred Danites marched out to take possession of the explored territory. On their way, they also came to the house of Micah, and, prompted by the five spies, they seized the sacred images and statues, and persuaded the Levite, who at first opposed their acts of violence, to accompany them to their new homes and to be their priest. They set at nought the imploring appeals of Micah, who prayed in vain for the restoration of his gods and his Levite. They then marched upon Laish, took the town, called it Dan, and set up the graven image, which continued to be worshipped there under the direction of Levites "all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh," nay "until the very time of the captivity of the land."

Another event recorded in the Book of Judges, an event full of barbarous wickedness, cruelty, and bloodshed,

characterises the unchecked confusion of the time even more strongly. — A Levite with one of his wives was returning from Bethlehem in Judah to his house in Mount Ephraim. They passed Jerusalem, unwilling to stay over night in a town which was still in the hands of the hostile Jebusites; so they pressed on northwards and arrived at dusk in Gibeah, a city of the Benjamites. No one offered them shelter or hospitality. They were sitting despondingly in the street, when an old man, who was himself but a sojourner in Gibeah, while his home was also in a town of Mount Ephraim, seeing the strangers, bid them come with him, and rest for the night in his house. He feasted them plentifully, and showed them every attention they so much required after their long and weary journey. When still at their repast, they were suddenly aroused by the wild clamour of angry voices. They saw the house surrounded by the frantic Benjamites, threatening instant destruction unless the Levite was delivered up to them. In fact, a scene was repeated resembling that which called down the Divine vengeance upon Sodom. Fearful for the safety of all the inmates of the house, the host sent out the Levite's wife. A terrible fate awaited her; she was ill-treated by the impious crowd, until she returned to the house, and fell dead on the threshold. There the Levite found her on the following morning. In an agony of revengeful grief, he placed her body on his ass, and returned to his home. He had determined upon an awful means of retribution. Dividing the body of the unfortunate woman into twelve parts, he sent one part to each tribe, and appealed for help and vengeance. A cry of horror ran from city to city; this time all Israel rose as one man from Dan to Beer-sheba; nor did the eastern tribes fail to send their aid. The warriors, 400,000 in number, assembled at Mizpah, where they held a council. The Levite there publicly re-

counted the details of the horrible crime. A shout of detestation was raised against the Benjamites; and all agreed that "there was no such deed done, nor seen, from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt." The men of Israel sent messengers to Gibeah, and sternly demanded the immediate surrender of the perpetrators of the outrage. But the haughty Benjamites, dead to all sentiments of justice, refused the request, and thus became accomplices of the atrocious misdeed. They boldly marched out to do battle with the united tribes of Israel, numbering 26,000 soldiers, and among them 700 chosen men, left-handed, but such dexterous slingers that they could sling stones at a hair's breadth without missing. They poured down upon their enemies, and defeated them on two successive days, killing 40,000 men. Mourning and terror spread in the camp of the Israelites; but praying, and fasting, and offering sacrifices, they took courage, and on the third day, by well-devised stratagems, they gained a decisive victory, and a scene of fearful carnage ensued. The splendid army of the Benjamites was completely cut to pieces, and pursued to the mountains and rocky districts; Gibeah and many other towns of Benjamin were burnt, and men and beasts killed by the sword. A small remnant of the Benjamites, six hundred men, found refuge in the caves of Rimmon, north of Gibeah.

When the first heat of vengeance had cooled down, when the terrible punishment with all its ghastly results became clear, despair and horror seized the Israelites; for their arms and their wrath had exterminated a whole tribe of their own brethren. Six-hundred Benjamites were left it was true; but at Mizpah, all the children of Israel had sworn that none of their daughters should ever marry a man of Benjamin. Again they met in council, trying to find a remedy for the misfortune. Now, among all the cities,

one, Jabesh in Gilead, had refused to obey the general summons, and had not joined their fellow-citizens in chastising the Benjamites. For this offence the people of Jabesh were to be punished. An army of the Israelites marched out against the city, besieged and took it, and slew all the inhabitants. Four hundred maidens alone were saved and brought back to the camp at Shiloh. The 600 Benjamites who still held out on their rock at Rimmon, were forgiven, and invited to return, and finally the four hundred virgins were given to them in marriage. But there were yet two hundred who had no wives. How was the difficulty to be overcome? The Israelites adopted a very curious device. On the day of a festival celebrated annually in Shiloh, the Benjamites were to lay in wait within the vineyards, and as they saw the virgins pass by singing and dancing, they were suddenly to emerge from their retreats, and each of them was to select a maiden and to carry her off to be his wife. This extraordinary measure succeeded: the fathers and brothers of the captured virgins were at first vehemently opposed to it; but when their anger subsided, they gave their consent, and were glad to think that the extinction of a brother-tribe would thus be prevented.

What a picture of the time is reflected in the story of the Levite and its sequel—the outrage and cruel murder, the fierce revenge, the impetuous fury of the Israelites, their apparently implacable hatred, and the final pardon of the Benjamites concluding with the strange scene in the vineyards of Shiloh! These are curious glimpses of that barbarous age, and, together with similar incidents narrated in the Book of Judges, form a fitting background for the deeds of the great warriors of Israel.

69. OTHNIEL — EHUD — SHAMGAR.

[Judg. III.]

The first generation of the conquerors passed away, and was succeeded by a race of men who, careless of the Law and the word of Moses, soon fell into dangerous intimacy with the surrounding nations. The Hebrews adopted the rites of the heathen, in spite of the stern warnings they had received. The Hebrew maid left her people to become the pagan's wife, and the Canaanite's daughter brought her idols and her superstitions into the tent of the Israelite. The sacred groves, dotted everywhere over the country, were visited by the Hebrew no less than by the heathen, and countless images were worshipped by both in common. The belief in the one omnipotent God of heaven and earth had hardly yet taken root among the chosen people. In this sad and degenerate condition, they easily fell a prey to powerful neighbours. Thus they had soon to feel the arms of Cushan-Rishataim, the king of Mesopotamia, who completely subdued them, and forced them to pay tribute for eight years. In their shame and despair they prayed to the Lord for deliverance. Their cries were heard, and God imbued with His spirit Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's youngest brother. He was the first prominent champion or "Judge" of the Hebrews in a troubled and helpless time. He shook off the yoke of the foreigner, and secured peace for forty years.

After Othniel's death, the Israelites relapsed into their old sin of idolatry, bringing in its train, as usual, anarchy and disunion, of which the surrounding nations never failed to take advantage. The Moabites, under the leadership of their king Eglon, in alliance with the Amalekites and the Ammonites, attacked and captured Jericho, the beautiful city with its famous groves of palm-trees. Thus possessed of the key to the whole country, they forced the Hebrews into bondage, in which they held them for eigh-

teen years. Loud and incessant were their prayers and lamentations. At last, there sprung from the tribe of Benjamin a man fearless and resolute, but no less cunning and dexterous, Ehud the son of Gera, who removed the disgrace from his people. He was, with others, selected to carry the tribute to Eglon, the king of Moab, who after receiving the money and presents, politely accompanied him a part of his way homeward, and then returned. When Ehud had arrived near Gilgal, he sent word to the king, that he had a secret message to deliver to him. He wore a long cloak, under which he concealed, at his right side—for he was left-handed — his double-edged sword a yard long. The king, a large and fat man, was ready to receive him. When he was reclining in his summer parlour, probably some spacious breezy room on the roof the house, Ehud entered and exclaimed, "I have a message from God to thee;" and drawing his sword with his left hand, thrust it into the king's body, and pressed it forward till it came out at the opposite side. He then escaped in haste, shrewdly managed to delay suspicion, and eluded his pursuers till he arrived safely in Mount Ephraim. Here he assembled the Hebrew army by the blast of his trumpet. When the affrighted servants of Eglon found him lying dead in the chamber, they gave the alarm, and the Moabite hosts, certain of victory, and now burning for battle, marched out to avenge their king. In the mean time, the army of the Israelites had advanced to Jericho; they occupied and closely watched the fords of the Jordan; they prevented all Moabites from crossing; and by Ehud's skilful leadership and daring, they slew on one day 10,000 men of the enemy. Thus the Moabites were expelled from the territory of the Hebrews, who now enjoyed peace and prosperity for eighty years.

It appears, however, that within this period the Hebrews were molested and enslaved by the Philistines; how

long they sighed under the yoke, our annals do not record; nor do they enter into details on the manner of their deliverance, briefly narrating: "And after Ehud was Shamgar, the son of Anath, who slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goad, and he also rescued Israel."

70. DEBORAH.

[Judg. IV. V.]

Again, however, the Israelites turned to idolatry, and despised the Law which they had sworn to obey. When their vigilant Judge Ehud was dead, they followed their sinful ways unchecked. From the north of Palestine, with nine hundred iron chariots, came Jabin, the powerful king of Hazor, whose famous general Sisera was the terror of his enemies. He easily defeated and subjected the Hebrews, and forced them to pay tribute for twenty years. Grievous was the oppression, and the piteous cry of despair rose to the Lord, who mercifully raised up a deliverer.

There lived at that time between Ramah and Bethel, in the mountain of Ephraim, a wise and God-fearing woman, Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth, renowned as a prophetess. In the midst of sin and idolatry, she had remained true to God and His word, and inspired all who saw and heard her with love and reverence. She was recognised and appealed to as the supreme judge by the whole nation. Under a palm-tree which remained famous in after-ages, she sat, and there uttered advice, warning, and judgment.

Seeing the oppression of the people, and feeling their misery, she sent for Barak, the son of Abinoam, who dwelt in Kadesh-Naphtali, a city in the far north, and who was probably known as a bold and valiant warrior. Him she selected as the champion of the nation. She bid him, in the name of God, call an army of 10,000 men from amongst the

people of Naphtali and Zebulun, who lived at the northern frontier of Palestine, and to assemble them on Mount Tabor; she would cause Sisera to pitch his camp at the river Kishon, so that the two armies would be confronted in the plain of Esdraelon; there, she confidently predicted, the chosen people would rout the Canaanites. Barak was afraid that this daring scheme, if undertaken by him alone, would not succeed; he believed that it required the assistance and authority of Deborah, to guide and inspire the soldiers; he, therefore, sent her this reply: "If thou wilt go, then will I go, but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go." Deborah rejoined promptly: "I will surely go with thee, but the journey that thou takest shall not be for thy honour, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then sounded the muster call throughout the land. But the days for a general answer to such a summons had passed; the disunion among the tribes became sadly manifest. The Ephraimites were the first to respond; Benjamin sent their slingers and archers; Manasseh followed with chosen men; Zebulun and Naphtali came boldly forward, ready to conquer or to die; and Deborah herself, traversing the land from Bethel to Kadesh and Mount Tabor, aroused the people of Issachar, and bid them follow her to the battle field. But the powerful tribe of Judah did not appear; Asher preferred his tranquil life on the sea-shore; Dan could not be induced to leave his ships, and risk his gains; Reuben, wavering and irresolute, remained idly among his sheep-folds; and the other tribes of Gilead continued unmoved in their peaceful pursuits. So many, indifferent to the dangers of their brethren, kept aloof both meanly and unwisely!

The Hebrew warriors, not numerous but singularly inspired by courage, assembled at Mount Tabor. When Sisera was informed of their advance, he felt that a great

struggle for deliverance was imminent, and he determined to crush what he considered an audacious rebellion by the whole strength of his army assisted by his nine hundred iron war-chariots. He drew up his troops along the river Kishon that was soon to become renowned as "the river of battles."

But Deborah knew that the Lord's help was near; she exclaimed to Barak: "Up, for this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into thy hand; is not the Lord gone out before thee?" Barak with his 10,000 men hastened promptly from the high-lands of Tabor, and rushed valiantly onward against the horsemen of Sisera. A fearful carnage ensued; the corpses of the slain enemies filled the plain, or were swept away by the waters of the Kishon; the formidable chariots were of no avail; Sisera himself, seeing every chance lost and abandoning all hope, leapt from his chariot, and fled on foot for his life. He escaped probably northwards, wandering among his well-known mountain refuges, until he came to the settlement of Heber the Kenite, who had severed himself from the Hebrews, and lived in the plain of Zaanaim and Kadesh, like an independent chief. As Jabin the king of Hazor and Heber the Kenite were at peace, Sisera felt that he had at last found a safe retreat. He went to one of the tents, a worn-out fugitive. Jael, the wife of Heber, came out to meet him. She was a true Hebrew woman at heart, although she dwelt in friendship with the idolators, and she exulted to find that the powerful general had fallen into her hands. Shrewdly dissembling her feelings, she said, "Turn in to me, my Lord, turn in to me, fear not." When he had entered, she showed him the most studied attention. He was thirsty and asked for water, she offered him a draught of sweet milk. He was weary and desired to rest, she covered him with a mantle; but he cautiously bade her, "Stand in the door of the tent, and

when any one comes and enquires of thee and says, Is there any man here? thou shalt say, No." She promised to do as he had requested. Then she waited a while until she was certain that he was asleep. Now the moment for executing her design had arrived. She drew one of the large tent-nails from the ground, and took a hammer in her hand; then advancing softly to the sleeping man, she struck the nail into his temples, and without fear or mercy, she fastened it firmly to the ground!

In the mean time, Barak had hotly continued his pursuit of Sisera. Following his traces, he arrived breathlessly at Heber's tent. Jael came out to meet him in all the flush of triumph, and exclaimed, "Come and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest." She led Barak into the tent, and there lay the great captain murdered, with the nail in his temples.

In verse and in plain narrative the deed of Jael has been extolled as one of supreme merit. And yet, can we really admire that deceitful and relentless woman, who profaned and disgraced the sacredness of hospitality, knew of no pity or tenderness to a wearied soldier, a fallen enemy, and perfidiously lured him to a terrible death? But her contemporaries saw in her only the most patriotic lover of her people, and therefore revered her as a heroine. They looked upon Sisera not as a trembling fugitive, but as the representative of heathen might and hatred, and therefore glorified his destroyer as the great instrument that decided the destiny of the chosen people. Though we, in our happier times and with our better experience, justly revolt from an act of treason and ferocity, we can at least understand how it was accepted and even praised by an oppressed and struggling people in that early dawn of civilisation. Did not the same age bring forth a Deborah, a true heroine endowed with a great and manly soul, but also with the

same admixture of unwomanly sternness? In what light did the deed appear to her? Let us see.

Returning, after the victory, to her peaceful abode in the mountain of Ephraim, she immortalised the recent war and herself by a poem of singular and almost unequalled beauty. But second only to its literary merit is its historical importance. It is not merely a jubilant song of triumph, of remarkable vividness of colouring, force of expression, and wealth of imagery, but a precious and faithful reflex of its time, especially with regard to the condition and mutual relation of the Hebrew tribes. So rich and so complete a picture has rarely been compressed within so small a compass.

The very commencement introduces us into the midst of the busy scene so full of excitement: "That leaders led Israel, that the people followed willingly, therefore praise ye the Lord. Hear, o kings, give ear, o princes; I will, yea I will sing to the Lord, I will offer praise to the Lord, the God of Israel." Then, in attempting to describe the power of God and His mercy towards Israel, she recalls to her mind that event, ever present to Hebrew poets and patriots, the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, followed by the grand revelation on Mount Sinai; she describes it with a few vigorous touches, and leaves us to infer that a similar instance of power and mercy had been witnessed in her own time. "Lord, when Thou camest out of Seir, when Thou didst step out of the Land of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens overflowed, and the clouds poured forth waters. Mountains quaked before the Lord, even that Sinai before the Lord God of Israel."

Now turning to her own time, she portrays its dangers, its confusion, and its helplessness with equal precision and impressiveness: "In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, in the days of Jael; the highways were untrodden, and the travellers of even paths went through crooked by-

ways. Chiefs were wanting in Israel, they were wanting, until Deborah arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel. They chose new gods; then was war in the gates: was there a shield or a spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?"

Unwilling to dwell on this sad picture of humiliation, she hastens, as if by a strong effort, to delineate with a few dramatic sentences, the rescue, the safety, the present pride of her people: "My heart is towards the rulers in Israel — you that came forward readily among the people, bless ye the Lord! You that ride on white asses, you that sit on embroidered covers, and walk openly on the road — give praise. With the voice of those that divide spoils at the water-wells, they recount the mercy of the Lord, the mercy of His chief in Israel: then the people of the Lord go down to the gates. — Awake, awake, Deborah, awake, awake, utter a song; arise Barak, and lead away thy captives, son of Abinoam." —

And now follow the call to arms, the preparations, the war-cry, the meeting of the warriors whose very steps as they rush onward, we seem to hear: "Then I spoke, Go down, O remnant, against the nobles; people of the Lord, go down against the mighty. Out of Ephraim there came those that have their root among Amalek; after thee, Benjamin among thy people; out of Machir came down rulers, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer. And my princes of Issachar were with Deborah; and Issachar, the support of Barak, rushes with him into the valley. At the rivers of Reuben there were great councils. Why didst thou abide among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? On the rivers of Reuben there were great councils. Gilead remained beyond the Jordan; and why did Dan abide in his ships? Asher continued on the sea-shore, and rested in his harbours. Zebulun is a people that give up their lives unto death, and Naphtali on the heights

of the field. . . Curse ye Meroz, says the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly its inhabitants; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." —

How will she describe the battle itself — the struggle so fierce and sanguinary, so decisive and all-important? A few words suffice to bring before our eyes the fury and the bloodshed, the miraculous aid and the fearful issue. "The kings came and fought; then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money. They fought from heaven—the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The river of Kishon swept them away, a river of battles is the river Kishon. Tread, oh my soul, upon the strong. There the horse-hoofs struck out on account of the hurry, the hurry of their mighty ones" — — Then she touches upon Jael's deed. Has she a word of compassion for the unfortunate captain, defeated foe though he be, or a word of condemnation for the woman who added deceit to cruelty? She is true to her people and to her age; she describes the act with even more than her ordinary power, she lingers over it with apparent delight and glowing admiration, and bursts forth in enthusiastic praise of her country-woman, who seemed, in her eyes, to have completed in the peaceful tent what she had herself begun in the battle field: "Blessed above all women shall Jael be, the wife of Heber the Kenite, blessed shall she be above all women in the tent. He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter on a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote his head, and she dashed to pieces and pierced through his temples. At her feet he sinks, he falls, he lies; at her feet he sinks, he falls; where he sinks, there he falls down destroyed!" —

But the stern poetess is capable of gentler feelings; she can understand the grief of Sisera's family; she leads us from the bloodstained tent of Jael to the palace of the warrior's mother bent down by mournful forebodings: "The mother of Sisera looks out at the window, she calls through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the footsteps of his horses? The wise among her ladies reply to her, and she returns answer to herself: Will they not find, will they not divide the prey? to every man a damsel or two, to Sisera a prey of many-coloured garments, a prey of many-coloured, embroidered garments, a many-coloured, two embroidered garments for the neck of a captured animal?"

But lest she be supposed to sympathise with the mother's grief, she concludes, almost abruptly, with a few words powerfully and grandly expressing her wishes and aspirations: "So let all Thy enemies perish, O Lord! But let those that love Him be as the sun when he goes forth in his might!"

71. GIDEON.

[Judg. VI—VIII.]

After forty years of peace, the Midianites, in conjunction with the Amalekites and other tribes of the eastern desert, tempted by the fertility and beauty of Palestine, invaded the land from the south. "They came as grasshoppers for multitude; both they and their camels were without number." They caused terrible devastations, and forced the Hebrews to flee from the cities panic-stricken, and to seek refuge in the mountains, in caves, and rocks. To save themselves from starvation, the Israelites continued to cultivate the soil as well as they could; but when the crops were ripening, the fierce enemies swept over them, destroying everything in the length and breadth of the land, the produce of the field, the flocks and herds. This sad and

humiliating condition lasted for seven years. In trembling and despair, the Israelites prayed to God for rescue, and He sent them a deliverer.

There dwelt in Ophrah, a city of Manasseh, on the western hill overshadowing the plain of Esdraelon, a man of the name of Gideon, the son of Joash, the Abi-ezrite. All his brothers had been put to death on Mount Tabor by the Midianites; he was the only surviving son of his father, the last of a grand and heroic family, "each one resembling the children of a king"; and he, in his valour and manly thoughtfulness, represented his race nobly. But even this family was tainted by idolatry; for Joash had in his house an altar of Baal, on which he had placed an image of Ashtarte, and where probably he and his whole tribe worshipped. Gideon alone seems to have remained uncorrupted by the evil influences that surrounded him, and to have kept firmly to the service of God. One day he was threshing out some ripe corn by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites, when an angel of the Lord appeared to him in human form, and greeted him with the words, "The Lord is with thee; thou mighty man of valour." But Gideon answered, "O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then has all this befallen us? and where are all His miracles of which our fathers told us saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? And now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." — "Go in this thy might," rejoined the angel, "and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites; indeed, I have sent thee." — These words fell upon a wondering ear; how could he, without prominent position and influence, lead his people to war and victory? Yet willing to accept the great mission, he asked for some sign to assure him that he had indeed heard a message from God. Entreating the angel to stay, he hastened into the house, and when he returned again, he

brought the meat of a kid, with unleavened cakes of flour and a pot of broth. But the angel, declining to taste of it, requested Gideon to lay the flesh and the unleavened cakes upon the stone, and to pour out the broth. As this was done, he touched the food with the end of his staff, when fire rose up out of the rock and consumed the meat and the cakes. Gideon then felt that he stood in the presence of the Lord; fear overcame him; he trembled for his life, because he had seen an angel of God; but he received cheering promises; and he built on the sacred spot an altar which he called *Jehovah-Shalom* (The Lord of Salvation).

In the silent hour of the night, the Divine voice came again to Gideon, bidding him to hew down the altar of Baal together with the image of Ashtarte, which polluted his father's house. He was then to build an altar to God upon which he was to offer a bullock seven years old as a burnt-offering, using for the sacrifice the wood of the destroyed idol. Aided by ten of his servants, Gideon executed this daring scheme by night. In the morning, when the deed was discovered, the men of Ophrah, full of rage, searched for the perpetrator; they discovered and convicted Gideon; they surrounded the house of Joash, and exclaimed angrily, "Bring out thy son that he may die, because he has cut down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the image of Ashtarte that was upon it." Joash, anxious to rescue his brave son, answered shrewdly, "Will you fight for Baal? will you save him? If he be a god, let him fight for himself, since some one has destroyed his altar." By this reply he silenced the incensed multitude, and Gideon received the name of Jerub-baal, that is, "Let Baal fight against him."

The campaign against the Midianites was now to commence, and Gideon conducted it as general. He easily col-

lected round him the men of his own family and clan; then sending out messengers throughout the northern districts of the land, he roused the warriors of Manasseh and Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali. The renown of his name and the reliance placed in his valour and wisdom, induced very large numbers to answer his call. Yet though filled with the spirit of the Lord, he could not divest himself of doubt and diffidence. He again prayed earnestly for a sign, this time to guarantee his success in the impending war. He spread the fleece of a sheep upon the ground, where he left it during the night; should he find the earth around dry, but the fleece saturated with dew, he would be convinced of the Divine assistance. On the next morning, he saw the ground dry, while the fleece was steeped in dew. Still a remnant of doubt lingered in his mind, and he prayed for the same sign reversed. The following day, copious dew lay on the ground, but the fleece was dry. Now at last Gideon's fears were quieted, and his resolution taken.

Thirty-two thousand men had answered to his summons; but that number was deemed by him too large, for the defeat of the enemy was to appear mainly as the work of God, not of men, and Israel was not to say, "My own hand has saved me." Therefore, Gideon proclaimed, "Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead." Twenty-two thousand soldiers left the camp. But as even the remaining 10,000 men were considered too many for the purpose, a curious device was adopted for weeding out the least energetic. Gideon took the men to the water: those who threw themselves on their knees and drank leisurely, were sent home; while those who, gathering the water in their hands, rapidly "lapped it as a dog laps", were retained: of the latter there were but three hundred men; and with this small band Gideon boldly undertook to meet the enemy who lay in the valley of Jezreel "as the sand by

the seaside for multitude". It was night, and the Lord bid Gideon arise and approach the camp of the heathens, which was sure to fall into his hands: if he was afraid to go alone, he might take his armour-bearer Phurah with him. So both stole softly, in the stillness of the night, into the valley. When they had reached the outskirts of the camp, they heard one man tell his dream to his comrade: "Lo, a cake of barley tumbled into the host of Midian, and came to the tents, and struck them that they fell, and overturned them, and the tents lay along"; after which he heard his comrade give this interpretation: "This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel; for into his hand has God delivered Midian and all the host." When Gideon heard these auspicious words, he worshipped God in gratitude, and returned hopefully to his men. He told them that the hour of action had come. The plan of attack was promptly made: the three hundred men were arranged in three divisions, each man provided with a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a torch within the pitcher; all the soldiers were in every respect to imitate Gideon's actions. The latter went onward accompanied by a hundred men; the rest followed. Gently they ascended the hill, and stood close to the unsuspecting enemy. Gideon advanced, blew a stirring blast on his trumpet, broke his pitcher, and held aloft the lighted torch. His example was instantaneously followed by his soldiers, who rushed forward to the war-cry, "Sword for the Lord and for Gideon." The deafening din of the trumpets aroused the sleeping Midianites, the blazing torches alarmed them. Utter confusion reigned in their camp; seized with a panic, and without attempting the slightest resistance, they turned in hasty flight, and sped on madly in the hope of gaining the fords of the Jordan, and thus to reach in safety the Desert or some friendly tribe. Fierce was the chase through Palestine; Gideon sent

his speedy messengers through all the mountain of Ephraim, bidding the people occupy at once the passes of the Jordan, and so cut off the retreat of the Midianites. The men of Ephraim promptly obeyed the command, and caused a terrible massacre at the fords of the Jordan. They captured also the two Midianite princes Oreb and Zeeb, slew them, and brought their heads as trophies to Gideon. A hundred and twenty thousand of the enemies fell in this fearful war.

But the men of Ephraim, hardy warriors, conscious of their growing power, and not free from overbearing pride which was later to cause fatal divisions, felt aggrieved that they should not have been summoned sooner to share in the glory of the victory, and they remonstrated sharply with Gideon. His judicious answer, reflecting the moderation and nobleness of his nature, averted a dangerous conflict: "What have I done," he replied, "in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer? God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian Oreb and Zeeb, and what was I able to do in comparison with you?" The Ephraimites were satisfied. Gideon and his three hundred men continued their pursuit of the enemy; they hastened on eastward, anxious to capture the Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna, crossed the Jordan, and arrived wearied and exhausted at the ancient city of Succoth. They begged for bread to satisfy their hunger; the men of Succoth answered tauntingly, "Dost thou hold Zebah and Zalmunna already in thy hands, that we should give bread to thy army?" Gideon swore to take fearful revenge if he should return victorious, and passed on with his faint followers. Having arrived at Penuel, he repeated his entreaty, was as heartlessly refused, and menaced a similar retribution. Meanwhile Zebah and Zalmunna had rallied at Karkor the remnant

of their army consisting of fifteen thousand men, eager to crush Gideon and his handful of followers. But the Hebrews, incited by despair, and fighting for their existence, surprised the hostile camp at an unguarded hour with complete success. The heathen army was routed and put to flight; Gideon dashed off in pursuit of the two kings and captured them. He proceeded with them to Succoth, summoned the elders of the town, seventy-seven in number, and bade them look upon his royal captives. "Behold here are Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom you mocked me, saying, Are Zebah and Zalmunna already in thy hands, that we should give bread to thy men that are weary?" Thereupon he carried out his fearful threat, and beat the elders to death with thorns and briars. He then fell upon the town of Penuel, and slew its inhabitants. Now he ordered Zebah and Zalmunna to be brought before him; the moment had arrived for fulfilling what he considered a sacred duty. "What manner of men", he asked the captives, "were those you slew at Tabor?" Promptly they replied, "As thou art, so were they, each one resembled the children of a king." Then Gideon exclaimed, "They were my brothers, the sons of my mother; as the Lord lives, if you had saved them alive, I would not slay you." Desirous to leave to his firstborn the merit and the glory of the deed, he called upon his son Jether to strike the death-blow. But the youth trembled to approach the famous heroes. Then the kings, anxious to escape the indignity of falling by the hand of a boy, requested Gideon, "Rise thou, and fall upon us, for as the man is, so is his strength." So Gideon himself avenged the murder of his brothers, and the war was concluded.

When perfect peace and security were restored, the Hebrews, ready to show their gratitude to the hero who by his fearless courage had restored to them their liberty and their homes, offered him the crown of royalty to be

hereditary among his descendants. But Gideon felt that his task was accomplished; he had always considered himself merely as an agent and instrument of God; he was satisfied to have been the champion of his people, he shrank from being their king, and he replied, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you, the Lord shall rule over you."

Nothing allows us a better insight into the strange character of the time than the fact recorded of Gideon after this noble answer, which seems to imply an absolute obedience to the Divine will. He requested the Israelites to bring him from the spoils as many golden trinkets as they would give up; and when they had presented heavy golden earrings, and chains taken from the camels' necks, and magnificent embroideries, he made of them an image or ephod, and set it up as an object of worship at Ophrah, his own city. Can we doubt that this image was dedicated not to an idol but to God, whom it was meant to represent? How far, therefore, was true Mosaism from being established in the minds of even firm believers in the one God!

Gideon had many wives, and became the father of seventy sons, besides whom a wife of inferior rank bore to him at Shechem another son whom he called Abimelech. He survived his glorious victories for forty years, a happy and peaceful time for the Israelites; and when he died at a great age, he was buried in the grave of his ancestors, mourned by a grateful nation.

72. ABIMELECH.

[Judg. IX.]

But with Gideon departed the faith and the gratitude of the people. They turned to idolatry, and the worship of Baal became again general in the land. A time of confusion and bloodshed followed. Abimelech, ambitious and unscrupulous, aspired to the sole rulership over Israel. He shrank from no crime to secure this end. He first stirred up the people of Shechem: "What is better for you — that seventy persons, all the sons of Jerubbaal, reign over you, or that one man reign over you? And remember that I am your bone and your flesh." He found sympathy and support, and proceeding to his father's house at Ophrah with a number of reckless and evil-minded men, he slaughtered all his brothers upon one great stone, possibly an old altar of Baal. Jotham alone, the youngest, escaped the terrible massacre. The men of Shechem now proclaimed Abimelech king. But Jotham, young as he was, felt deeply his wicked brother's atrocity, and longed to avert the danger that threatened the people. He went up to Mount Gerizim, and when large numbers of Shechemites had assembled, he addressed to them the following fine parable, the first we read of in the Bible:

"Hearken to me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken to you. Once the trees went forth to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive-tree, 'Reign thou over us;' but the olive-tree said to them, 'Should I leave my fatness, which God and man honour in me, and go to wave over the trees?' Then the trees said to the fig-tree, 'Come thou and reign over us;' but the fig-tree said to them, 'Should I forsake my sweetness and my choice fruit, and go to wave over the trees?' Then the trees said to the vine, 'Come thou and reign over us;' and the vine said to them,

'Should I leave my wine, which cheers God and man, and go to wave over the trees?' Then all the trees said to the bramble, 'Come thou to reign over us;' and the bramble said to the trees, 'If in truth you anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon."

Concluding the parable with an appeal which implied the interpretation, Jotham exclaimed: "Now, therefore, if you have done truly and sincerely, in that you have made Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him as his hands deserve— for my father fought for you, and exposed his life to the danger, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian — . . if you then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice you in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you; but if not, let fire come out of Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech."

As Jotham ceased speaking, he disappeared from the mountain top; and fearful for his life, he fled from Gerizim to Beer, where he remained in concealment.

Abimelech was now undisputed ruler, at least over some districts, and he maintained the power for three years. But then a spirit of mutual hostility arose between him and the people of Shechem; the latter way-laid and plundered the followers of Abimelech, who, feeling no longer safe in his old stronghold of Shechem, took up his abode in Arumah. — Gaal, the son of Ebed, dexterously fostered the dissension; at a vintage-feast, when all the people were assembled in a great temple of Baal, venting their wrath against their late tyrant in maledictions, he said: "Who is

Abimelech, and who is Shechem that we should serve him? Is not he the son of Jerubbaal, and Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem; for why should we serve him?" He asked to be entrusted with the leadership against Abimelech; he obtained it, and made at once preparations for an attack. But Zebul, Abimelech's faithful and vigilant general, was informed of the plans, and frustrated them; he advised his master to march with his army towards Shechem, to wait in an ambush during the night, and then to fall upon the town. The scheme succeeded completely. Abimelech surprised Gaal, who was compelled to flee, and he took Shechem, which, after a fearful carnage, he razed to the ground. Many Shechemites, with women and children, had escaped to a fortified sanctuary of the god Baal-Berith; Abimelech kindled fire around it, and more than a thousand souls perished in the flames. Then he quickly advanced upon the town Thebez; but here his sanguinary career was to come to a disgraceful end. The inhabitants sought refuge in the strong tower where they tried to hold out against the besiegers. They climbed up to the top, and looked upon the well-equipped army beneath them. The daring Abimelech had already fought his way up to the very gates; he was on the point of hurling the burning firebrands into the midst of his enemies, when a woman, in her rage and despair, threw down a mill-stone upon his head and crushed him. In the agonies of death, he cried hurriedly to his armour bearer, "Draw thy sword, and slay me, lest men say of me, a woman slew me."

Thus ended the short and evil reign of Abimelech. A unity, which had little of strength and nothing of liberty, was broken up; the Israelites dispersed to their homes; Jotham's curse was realised.

73. TOLA — JAIR — JEPHTHAH.

[Judg. X—XII.]

After the time of Abimelech, the Bible mentions briefly two Judges, but gives us hardly more than their names — Tola of the tribe of Issachar, who dwelt in the town Shamir in Mount Ephraim, and judged Israel for twenty-three years; and Jair, a Gileadite, who was leader for twenty-two years; he had thirty sons who possessed as many cities in Gilead, and who are described as "riding each upon his ass colt."

After the death of Jair, the Israelites fell back into the darkest idolatry, and worshipped many gods of the surrounding nations. As usual, idolatry was the forerunner of misery and bondage. The heathen nations, ever watchful and ready to take advantage of dissensions, attacked the Hebrews. First the Philistines vexed them, and then the Ammonites fell upon the tribes of Gilead in the east of the Jordan, made them tributary, and imposed upon them heavy burdens, under which they sighed for eighteen years.

Soon afterwards, the Ammonites, forcing their way across the Jordan, attacked the powerful tribes of Judah, Ephraim, and Benjamin. There was mourning and consternation among the Israelites, who could not but feel that their own sins and offences had called down upon them this terrible scourge. They prayed earnestly for deliverance; and promising faithful obedience, they eagerly destroyed their idols. In greater force then ever, and flushed by their victories, the Ammonites were assembled in the land of Gilead, prepared for warfare. The Hebrews held council at Mizpah in trembling fear; for there was none who durst lead them against the mighty hosts of the heathen. At last they bethought themselves of an able chieftain, and to him they appealed in their despair. Jephthah, a

Gileadite, renowned for his valour, had been driven from his father's house by his brothers, who disputed his share in the inheritance. He had fled to the land of Tob, where he lived a wild and reckless life, surrounded by a band of lawless followers. To him came the elders of Gilead, entreating him to return with them, and lead the Hebrew hosts against their dreaded enemy. He agreed to their request, but he insisted upon one condition, which was accepted, that, should he defeat and drive back the Ammonites, he was to be the sole chief and ruler of the people of Gilead. Then he felt, probably for the first time, that he was chosen to fight as the warrior of the Lord for the glory of His name and the rescue of His people. In this solemn turning-point of his life, inspired by a feeling of religious enthusiasm, he made the following vow to the Lord: "If Thou shalt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, then it shall be that, whosoever comes forth to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer him up for a burnt-sacrifice." And unenlightened as he was, he meant to perform a pious act, a deed of extraordinary devotion.

After fruitlessly attempting a peaceful settlement with the King of Ammon, Jephthah went forth at the head of the Hebrew army. He fought well and bravely, utterly subdued the Ammonites, smiting them in the length and breadth of their country, taking twenty cities. The Hebrew tribes of Gilead were delivered from their bondage. The news of the glorious victories reached Mizpah, where Jephthah's household was established. He had an only child, a daughter, affectionate, devoted, and heroic. She went out joyfully, to meet her father when he returned from the battle-field, playing the timbrel and dancing. As he saw her approach in her unconscious gladness, bitter agony pierced his soul; he rent his garments, and a cry of anguish burst

forth from his lips: "Alas, my daughter, thou bendest me low indeed, and bringest me to destruction, for I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back." The maiden was equal to the great occasion; she felt the vow was sacred and inviolable, and she shrank not from its accomplishment. She accepted her fate with resignation, merely entreating that for two months she might be permitted to live with her companions in seclusion on the mountains, there to bewail her untimely death. Was Jephthah unable to see, that the vow was in itself impious, that it could never have been acceptable in the eyes of the Lord, and that it was detestable blasphemy to offer such a sacrifice? Great beyond our present means of realising it must have been the confusion of the lawless times, in which such deeds could be publicly done and regarded as meritorious. Jephthah granted his daughter's last request; and when she returned to his house after two months, "he did with her," the Bible tells us, considerately veiling the awful scene, "according to his vow." The memory of the unhappy maiden was cherished among her country-women; for it became a custom for the daughters of Israel, annually to go up to the mountains and to praise her obedience and fortitude.

When the war was concluded, the Ephraimites appeared with an army in Gilead, and addressed to Jephthah the same haughty remonstrance which they had before made to Gideon: "Wherefore didst thou proceed to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? We will burn thy house upon thee with fire!" Jephthah replied, that in the time of distress he had invited the Ephraimites to join him, but they had sent no help; and he at once marched against them, drove them back to the Jordan, and occupied the fords. Now, when fugitives came and desired to pass, they were bidden to say the word *shibboleth* (meaning stream); if they pronounced it *sibboleth*, they were

recognised as Ephraimites (for in their dialect *sh* was pronounced like *s*), and they were put to death. Thus fell 22,000 men of Ephraim.

74. IBZAN — ELON — ABDON — SAMSON.

[Judg. XII—XVI.]

After the death of Jephthah, who judged Israel for six years, we have a string of mere names presenting but little importance to us. Thus we hear of *Ibzan* of Bethlehem with his thirty sons and thirty daughters-in-law; of *Elon*, a native of Zebulun; and *Abdon* of Pirathon in Ephraim, who had forty sons and thirty grand-sons — the three together ruling over Israel for 25 years.

But the person and history of the next Judge are associated with features and events which seem to lead us to the old mythical traditions of Greece rather than to the annals of the chosen people. The life of Samson, so vividly told in the Book of Judges, so full of hazards and risks, of buoyancy and rude humour, finds its counterpart in the fabled deeds of Hercules. Unlike the other Judges, Samson performs all amazing feats of valour and strength alone and unaided; he never leads the people to great enterprises; he is their sole champion, rejoicing in his strength, and rushing into perils for the mere delight he feels in braving them. There is a quaintness and lightheartedness about this giant warrior, which give to his adventures a wonderful interest enhanced, perhaps, by the fearful tragedy which concludes his career. The story is peculiarly life-like, and yet it sounds almost legendary in its details. His exploits are ever listened to with wonder and admiration, and his sayings, chiefly riddles and puzzles, never fail to cause pleasure and merriment.

The land of Canaan was bounded on its south-western frontiers by the territory of the Philistines which, running

into the provinces of Dan and Judah, extended in a narrow strip of land along the shore of the Mediterranean. The Philistines, descendants of the giant races that once possessed Canaan, rude, warlike, and restless, had grown into a powerful nation, and were among the most implacable and most dangerous enemies of the Hebrews. In these perpetual feuds, the Israelites, weakened by idolatry and disunion, were often defeated and subdued, and had then to submit to merciless oppression. The burdens both of the war and servitude fell naturally most heavily upon the neighbouring tribe of the Danites; but they were felt with more or less weight by the whole nation. During forty years the Israelites bore the hateful yoke, and they sent up their cries for help und rescue.

Their deliverer came at last from the tribe of Dan. In the small town of Zorah, there lived a man of the name of Manoah, whose wife was childless. One day an angel appeared to her declaring, that she would become the mother of a son who should, in due time, save the Hebrews from the hand of the Philistines. The boy was from his birth to be dedicated to God as a Nazarite; no razor was ever to touch his hair; even the mother was to abstain from strong drink and all unclean food. Amazed by what she had heard, she told it to her husband, who devoutly prayed for another appearance of the Divine messenger, to learn more fully the duties that awaited him and his wife. The vision was repeated, and the angel announced again, this time both to Manoah and his wife, the birth of the wondrous child, and renewed his former injunctions both with respect to the boy and the mother. Manoah entreated his guest to stay and to partake of a meal which he would speedily prepare. The angel declined, but left it to him to sacrifice a burnt-offering to God. When Manoah had laid the kid he had slaughtered upon the rock which he was using for an altar, and had

kindled the fire, the angel, rising upon the flame, ascended with it towards heaven, and was lost to their view. Awed yet reassured by the miracle, Manoah and his wife worshipped silently, certain that the promise they had received would come true.

When the child was born, he was called Samson, the sunny, the bright; and he grew, and God's blessing was with him. His exploits commenced when he was a mere youth. On one of his frequent roaming expeditions, he came to Thimnah, situated north of his native town Zorah. There he saw a Philistine maiden who so pleased him that he resolved to make her his wife. His parents were unwilling to bring an idolatress into their household, and entreated their son to select a bride from among his own people. But Samson obstinately insisted upon his choice, and went to Thimnah with his father and mother, to make them acquainted with the maiden. On the way, and whilst he was wandering alone in the vineyards near the town, he was met by a young lion; he seized the wild beast, and rent it asunder as if it had been a kid. Then he joined his parents unconcerned, without mentioning his feat. Returning to Thimnah some time afterwards to celebrate his marriage, he found, upon looking at the spot where he had before killed the lion, that a swarm of bees had built their hive in the carcase. He took some of the honey and ate it on his way. At Thimnah, he prepared a wedding feast, to which he invited thirty of his companions, and which was to last for seven days. Delighting in riddles, and desirous to perplex his guests, he put before them the following puzzle: "Out of the eater came forth food, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." If they guessed the meaning, he promised to give to each of them a shirt and a suit of apparel, but if not, then they were to give him thirty shirts and thirty suits of apparel. Unable to explain the riddle, the guests urged Samson's

bride to persuade him to tell her the interpretation, and then to communicate it to them. She succeeded by artful appeals to her husband's tenderness; and on the last day of the feast the men said: "What is sweeter than honey, what is stronger than a lion?" Samson, easily divining the source of their knowledge, answered in his quaint manner: "If you had not ploughed with my heifer, you had not found out my riddle." Resolved to pay his debts in no ordinary way, and at the same time to chastise the cunning deceit of the Philistines, he went down to Ashkelon, and in the full flush of his strength slew thirty men, and stripped them of their garments, which he gave to the wedding guests. He then returned, angry and mortified, to his father's house in Zorah.

In the height of the eastern summer, at the time of the wheat harvest, Samson came back to claim his wife, when her father told him that in his absence she had been given to one of his companions, and offered him her younger sister in her stead. Enraged at the insult, he exclaimed, "This time I am free of guilt with respect to the Philistines, if I do evil to them;" he rushed out into the fields, caught three hundred foxes, tied them together by their tails two and two, putting a lighted firebrand between them, and let them loose into the standing corn, into the vineyards, and the olivegroves. The affrighted Philistines asked each other, "Who has done this?" And when they heard, it was Samson who thus sought to punish his father-in-law's treachery, they went up to the house of the latter, and burnt it to the ground. Samson's wife and her father perished in the flames. Some of the old affection was still lingering in the hero's heart, and eager to avenge his wife's cruel and untimely death, he attacked the Philistines single-handed, and caused a great slaughter among them. Then he hurried back into the territory of Judah, and there

concealed himself in one of the caves of the rocks of Etam. The incensed Philistines pursued him, and demanded that the daring offender should be delivered into their hands. The men of Judah, fearing their masters and anxious to propitiate them, surrounded the cave where Samson lay hidden, remonstrated with him sharply for what they considered reckless imprudence, bound him with two new cords, and brought him a prisoner to the Philistine camp at Lechi. A shout of joy arose from the heathen hosts; but "the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon Samson, and the cords upon his arms became as flax burnt with fire, and his bands fell loose from his hands." Then taking for his weapon the jaw-bone of an ass which he found near, he slew with it a thousand men, in commemoration of which exploit the place where it was achieved was called "Ramath Lechi" (the height of the jaw-bone). Wandering alone amidst the rocks, weary and exhausted, far from brook or spring, the hero prayed earnestly to God for help; the ground clove at his feet, and a stream of refreshing water rushed up before him: the spring remained, and was long famous under the name of "En-hakkore" (Spring of the praying).

Samson was now the recognised chief and Judge of Israel. His strength and the terror of his name were sufficient to maintain peace for twenty years.

One night, when he had roamed into Gaza, one of the chief cities of the Philistines, his enemies, ever lying in wait for him, surrounded the walls and barred the gates, with a view of attacking and killing him in the morning. But Samson, guessing their evil designs, arose at midnight, and unhinging the two huge gates, placed them on his shoulders, bar and all, and carried them as far as the top of a hill before Hebron.

In the valley of Sorek, in the territory of Judah, there dwelt a woman, Delilah, deceitful and avaricious, whom

Samson loved. The wily Philistines determined to make her the instrument of his ruin. She was to entice from him the secret of his strength. It is a strange incident in his life, showing us, how weak was the moral nature of that giant in outward strength. At first, he tried to baffle the insidious enquiries of the traitress, and his answers evinced his usual humour: "If they bind me with seven fresh withs that were never dried, then shall I be as weak as any other man." When he had fallen asleep, Delilah, hiding a number of Philistines in the room, tied his arms with green withs, and suddenly arousing him, she exclaimed, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" He sprang up and broke the withs, as a thread of tow crumbles away when touched by fire. The secret of his strength was still his own. Again the false temptress urged him to tell her, how he could effectually be pinioned. Samson, enjoying the jest, replied, "If they bind me fast with new ropes, which have never been used, then shall I be weak and be as any other man." Delilah fastened him with new ropes, and once more gave the signal for the Philistines' attack. But Samson tore the cords from his arms like threads. When Delilah still continued to weary him with her entreaties, he said, he would lose his strength, if she entwined the seven locks of his head with linen threads. In his sleep she did so, and fixed his locks to the wall with a strong nail, but at the words, "The Philistines are upon thee!" he started up from his sleep, carrying away with him the nail, and facing his enemies in unimpaired vigour. Delilah now lavished upon the hero her fondest caresses: "How canst thou say, I love thee, when thy heart is not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lies." The rich reward which the princes of the nation had promised for her treachery, incited her to repeat the request again and again; she allowed Samson no peace and no rest, "until his soul

was vexed to death." Too confident to flee from this evil woman, and too weak to resist her, he at last poured out his whole heart; he told her that the mystery of his power lay in his hair, which no razor had touched from the day of his birth, and that as long as he was truly and faithfully a Nazarite to the Lord, he would remain invincible. Delilah felt that this time he had spoken the truth; she called the Philistine chiefs, and informed them that at last she had Samson indeed in her hands. With well-feigned affection, she watched beside her unfortunate victim till he slept and then she softly bid a man cut the long and carefully preserved locks from his head. When the fatal work was finished, she cried out, "The Philistines are upon thee!" Samson awoke, unconcerned as before, trusting that he would rid himself of his enemies as he had done so often — but his strength was gone. The Philistines fell upon him, made him their prisoner, cruelly put out his eyes, and brought him to Gaza, where they loaded him with iron chains, and made him grind wheat in the prison house.

The Philistine people rejoiced over the fall of the mighty Hebrew champion; they held public festivals and revelries, and offered sacrifices and thanksgivings to their god Dagon. It was during one of these feasts of wild merry-making that they brought out their captive, cruelly to make sport of him in his misery and blindness. The temple of the god Dagon was filled with vast numbers of people; three thousand were on the roof alone, whilst the inner part of the building was thronged to excess. Samson was led out of his prison, and his inhuman masters bid him sing and dance before them. A boy was leading him by the hand, and placed him between two of the pillars that supported the colossal building. In the midst of his toil and degradation, his hair had begun to grow, and his strength had imperceptibly returned. He felt it; a great resolve

flashed upon his mind, and at once matured into deed. He said to the lad, "Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereon the house stands, that I may lean upon them." Then he poured out a fervent prayer from the depth of his soul: "O Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, o God, that I may take one revenge upon the Philistines for my two eyes." And now grasping both pillars, one with each hand, he exclaimed; "Let me die with the Philistines!" As he bent down the pillars with all his might, "the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein, and the dead whom he slew at his death were more than those whom he slew in his life."

The consternation which this fearful event caused among the Philistines, enabled Samson's brothers and relations to rescue the body of their great kinsman from the land of the heathen, and to bury it in the territory of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol, in the grave of his father Manoah.

75. THE STORY OF RUTH.

[Book of Ruth.]

The stormy period, the events of which we have just related, is relieved by a glimpse of bright sunshine, all the more cheering for the surrounding darkness. It is a beautiful episode in the lives of two women, a Hebrew and a Moabitess; and it is told so sweetly and so charmingly, that the story of Ruth and Naomi may well be called the great Idyl of the Bible. It is a refreshing interlude between the history of the Judges and the labours of Samuel, between the old times of lawlessness and the age of the new kingdom.

There are but few women whose destinies and deeds are narrated in the Bible with some fulness, and those few are

principally conspicuous for energy and courage, like Deborah, Jael, and Esther. But the memory of Ruth is rich with affection and gentleness, devotion and filial attachment, unselfish and pure-minded simplicity. The very sound of her name conjures up before our eyes busy harvest scenes in the land of Palestine, the young men reaping, the maidens gleaning, and the stately yet kindly figure of Boaz moving among his sheaves. It is the one peaceful page snatched from the turbulent lives of the Hebrews of that time; not fanciful like the feats of Samson, not fierce and inspiring like the work of Deborah, but homely and winning in its details, simple yet picturesque.

We can do no better than give the story as much as possible in the very words of the Bible, inimitable in their beauty and childlike plainness.

"It happened in the days when the Judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. And they came into the country of Moab, and stayed there. And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. And they took to themselves wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelt there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them, and thus Naomi alone was left of her two sons and her husband. Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, and returned from the country of Moab, for she had heard that God had looked upon His people and given them bread. And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go return each to her mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you and with me; the Lord grant you, that you may find rest

each of you in the house of her husband.' Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voice and wept. But they said to her, 'Surely we will return with thee to thy people.' And Naomi replied, 'Return home, my daughters, go your way... my lot is much bitterer than yours, for the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.' And they lifted up their voice and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law [and departed]; but Ruth clung to her. And Naomi said, 'Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back to her people and to her gods, return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, 'Entreat me not to leave thee and to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go, and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.' When Naomi saw that Ruth was steadfast in her purpose, she left off persuading her. So they two went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they arrived at Bethlehem, all the city was in excitement about them, and they asked, 'Is this Naomi?' And she replied to them, 'Call me not Naomi (gracefulness), but Mara (afflicted), for the Almighty has afflicted me very much: I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty' . . . So Naomi and Ruth came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley-harvest.

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after any one in whose sight I may find grace.' And Naomi said to her, 'Go my daughter.' And she went and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and it so chanced that the portion of the field belonged to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the

reapers, 'The Lord be with you,' and they answered him, 'The Lord bless thee.' Then Boaz said to his servant who was set over the reapers, 'To whom does this young woman belong?' And the servant who was set over the reapers answered, 'It is the Moabitish young woman that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab; and she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves; so she came, and has continued from the morning until now; it is but little that she rested in the house.' Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, nor go from hence, but abide here close by my maidens; let thy eyes be on the field that they reap, and go thou after them; behold, I have charged the men that they shall not touch thee; and when thou art thirsty, go to the vessels and drink of that which the men have drawn.' Then she fell on her face and bowed down to the ground, and said to him, 'Why have I found grace in thy eyes that thou shouldst take notice of me, seeing I am a stranger?' And Boaz answered and said to her, 'I have been fully told everything that thou hast done to thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband, that thou hast left thy father, and thy mother, and the land of thy birth, and art come to a people which thou knewest not heretofore: the Lord recompense thy work, and thy reward be complete from the Lord God of Israel, to whose wings thou art come to seek refuge.' Then Ruth said, 'Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord, for thou hast comforted me, and hast spoken friendly to thy handmaid, though I am not like one of thy handmaidens.' And Boaz said to her at meal time, 'Come thou hither and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar.' And she sat beside the reapers, and they reached her roasted corn, and she ate and was satisfied and left over. And she rose to glean; then Boaz commanded his men, saying, 'Let her

glean also among the sheaves, and do not vex her; and let also fall some of the bundles on purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.' So Ruth gleaned in the field until the evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it, and went into the city . . . and she took out and gave to her mother-in-law what she left over after she was satisfied. And Naomi said to her, 'Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where didst thou work? blessed be he that took notice of thee!' And Ruth answered, 'The man's name with whom I worked is Boaz.' And Naomi said, 'Blessed be the Lord who has not left off His kindness to the living and to the dead: the man is near of kin to us, one of our redeemers.' And Ruth said, 'He said to me also, Thou shalt keep close by my men, until they have ended all my harvest.' Then Naomi replied, 'It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, and that they do not meet thee in any other field.' So she kept close by the maidens of Boaz to glean to the end of the barley harvest and of the wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law."

We pause in the narrative to remind the reader of the law observed among the ancient Hebrews, that if a man died, leaving a childless widow, his nearest of kin was bound to purchase his property and marry his widow, in order to "redeem" his name from oblivion. Naomi, naturally anxious to preserve the memory of her deceased husband and sons, was resolved to act upon this law, the more as Boaz, Elimelech's near kinsman, had been found, and had shown such kindness to Ruth. We now continue in the words of the Bible.

"Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'My daughter, must I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now, is not Boaz our kinsman? Behold, he

winnows barley to night in the threshing-floor. Therefore, wash and anoint thyself, and put on thy raiment, and go down to the threshing-floor, but do not make thyself known, until he has finished eating and drinking. And when he lies down, mark the place, and go there . . . and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.' And Ruth replied, 'All that thou sayest to me I will do.' And she went down to the floor, and did everything that her mother-in-law had told her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and when his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn; and she came up softly, and laid herself down at his feet. And it happened at midnight that the man was afraid, and he turned himself, and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, 'Who art thou?' And she answered, 'I am Ruth, thy handmaid; spread therefore thy protecting wing over thy handmaid, for thou art a redeemer.' And he said, 'Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter! Thou hast shown more kindness in the latter time than at first, because thou didst not follow the young men whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not, I will do to thee all that thou requirest; for all the city of my people knows that thou art an excellent woman. And now it is true that I am a redeemer, but there is yet one nearer than I. Stay this night, und it shall be in the morning that if he will redeem thee, well, let him redeem thee; but if he will not redeem thee, then I will redeem thee, as the Lord lives: lie down until the morning. And she lay at his feet, until the morning, and she rose up before one could recognise another. . . And Boaz said to her, 'Bring thy cloak, and hold it;' and when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it upon her, and she went into the city. And when she came to her mother-in-law, she told her all that Boaz had done to her. . . . Then Naomi said, 'Remain, my daughter, until thou knowest how the matter will turn out, for

the man will not rest until he has finished the matter this day."

The gate of the city was in those days the chief place for all public assemblies; it was the open court of justice, where men pleaded their cases, where redress was sought, and all claims were decided.* It was there that Ruth's fate was settled. "Boaz went up to the gate, and sat down there; and behold, the redeemer of whom Boaz had spoken, was passing by, and he said, 'Ho, such a one, stop and sit down here'; and he sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, 'Sit down here;' and they sat down. And he said to the redeemer, 'Naomi that is come back out of the country of Moab, sells a piece of land which belonged to Elimelech. And I thought to inform thee, and say, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it, but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me that I may know, for there is none to redeem it beside thee, and I am after thee!' And the other replied, 'I will redeem it.' Then Boaz said, 'When thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou buyest it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, in order to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.' But the redeemer said, 'I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar my own inheritance: redeem thou my right of redemption for thyself, for I cannot redeem it.' Now this was the manner in former times in Israel with respect to redeeming and to changing, to confirm all things: a man took off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour, and this was the custom in Israel. Therefore the redeemer said to Boaz, 'Buy it for thee,' and he took off his shoe. And Boaz said to the elders and to all the people, 'You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover

* See p. 38.

Ruth, the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon have I acquired to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place; you are witnesses this day.' And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, 'We are witnesses: the Lord make the woman that is come into thy house like Rachel and like Leah who both built up the house of Israel; and acquire wealth in Ephrath, and be famous in Bethlehem!' So Boaz took Ruth and she was his wife . . . And she bore a son, and the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed be the Lord who has not left thee this day without a redeemer, and may his name be famous in Israel; he shall be to thee a comforter of thy life, and a support of thy old age; for thy daughter-in-law who loves thee, and who is better to thee than seven sons, has born him." The child was called Obed, who became the father of Jesse, and the grand-father of king David.

Thus the affectionate and true-hearted Moabite woman was the ancestress of Israel's greatest ruler.

VI. THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SAMUEL.

76. SAMUEL'S YOUTH.

[1 Sam. I—III.]

In Mount Ephraim, at Ramathaim Zophim, there dwelt a man of the name of Elkanah, who had two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had children, but the pious and humble-minded Hannah had none; yet Elkanah loved his childless wife most. Every year this family went up to offer sacrifices at Shiloh, which was still the common place of worship for all Israel. Here was the Ark and the Tabernacle, and here were officiating priests and Levites, who performed the sacred rites for the people. The High-priest at this time was Eli, a lineal descendant not of Eleazar, but of Aaron's youngest son Ithamar; he had also been the Judge of Israel for many years, and was now weak and advanced in age. At the annual meetings in Shiloh, it was customary for the worshippers to hold sacrificial repasts, in which their entire households took part, besides invited guests, especially the poor and the Levites. Now, at these meals, Elkanah would give the largest or most valued portions to his favourite wife Hannah. This was felt as a slight and an insult by Peninnah, who became jealous of her childless rival. She vented her anger freely upon Hannah,

who wept and touched nothing at the feast. Elkanah, seeing her distress, asked, "Hannah, why weepest thou, and why eatest thou not, and why is thy heart grieved? Am I not better to thee than ten sons?" But Hannah was troubled and oppressed with sorrow. At one of her yearly visits to Shiloh, she went alone to the door of the Tabernacle, and entering within the holy precincts, she sought relief in prayer. She poured out the distress and bitterness of her soul before the Lord, and as was usual in those days, her supplication took the form of a vow. "O Lord of Hosts", she said, "if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thy handmaid, and remember me, and not forget Thy handmaid, but wilt give to Thy handmaid a man-child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head."

As she prayed silently and inwardly, her lips moved, but no word was heard. From his seat near the entrance, Eli the High-priest had seen her come in, and closely watched her. His anger was roused, for he thought the strange woman was drunk, and at last he exclaimed, "How long wilt thou be drunken! Put away thy wine from thee!" Hannah answered meekly, "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord: count not thy handmaid for a worthless woman, for out of my great grief and misery have I spoken hitherto." Then Eli knew her words were true, and he bid her go in peace, saying, "The God of Israel will grant thee thy petition which thou hast asked of Him." Hannah went back comforted and with a cheerful countenance, and her faith was rewarded. For a son was born to her, and she called him Samuel ("the Lord hears"). This child, she felt, was but confided to her as a trust; he was to belong to God throughout life; for she meant faithfully to carry out the

vow she had offered in her distress. She determined not to go up to Shiloh until the boy was weaned, when she would leave him in the Tabernacle under the care of Eli. Then, at the appointed time, she made with her little son the journey to the holy town; there she offered up a bullock for a sacrifice, and then led Samuel into the Tabernacle, and presented him to Eli, saying, "For this child I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him: therefore I will lend him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he shall be lent to the Lord."

Then Hannah prayed again, but now her heart was throbbing with gratitude and praise, and her prayer was one of gladness and thanksgiving. It ran thus:

"My heart rejoices in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord, my mouth is enlarged over my enemies, because I rejoice in Thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord, for there is none beside Thee, neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly, let not arrogance come out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were satisfied have hired themselves out for bread, and they that were hungry ceased to be so; nay the barren has born seven, and she that has many children has grown feeble. The Lord kills and makes alive, He brings down to the grave and brings up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich, He brings low and lifts up. He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He has set the world upon them. He will guard the feet of His pious servants, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength no man prevails. The adversaries

of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall He thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength to His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed."

Hannah returned to Ramah with her husband, leaving their little son in the care of Eli. Samuel grew and began to assist in the service of the Tabernacle, girded with a linen ephod like a priest. Young as he was, the Lord's grace rested upon him, and he won favour in the eyes of all men. Elkanah and his household came up yearly to Shiloh to offer their regular sacrifice; on these occasions Hannah never failed to bring with her presents and garments for her child. She was blessed for her love and self-denial; for in the course of time she became the mother of three other sons and of two daughters.

Eli's declining years were embittered by the wicked conduct of his sons Hophni and Phinehas. These served likewise as priests at the Sanctuary, but unscrupulous and depraved, they committed the most flagrant offences at the very gate of the Tabernacle and in the holy place itself. They even perverted the people that came to sacrifice in Shiloh. It was useless for Eli to reprove them; they would not listen to him, but continued in their evil ways.

We are told that "a man of God", a prophet or seer probably, came to Eli, to warn him of the fate that would befall his sons; they were sinning against God most grievously, and were destined both to die on one day. The house of Eli would cease to be the house of God's priests, and sink into sad poverty and contempt. "I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest," said the messenger in the name of the Lord, "that shall do according to that which is in My heart and in My mind, and I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed for ever. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thy house, shall come

and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices that I may eat a piece of bread."

It was from the lips of Samuel that Eli was to hear this mournful message repeated and confirmed; for, when still very young, Samuel received a Divine revelation, and was endowed with that peculiar gift of God's grace, which raised him at once from the priest to the prophet. — It was night or early morning, and the Tabernacle was dimly illumined by the soft light from the lamp that burnt there from sunset to sunrise. Eli who had been rapidly growing weaker and more infirm, was lying down in his place. Samuel also was sleeping within the sacred dwelling, when a voice, calling his name, aroused him. He sprang up, and running to Eli, said, "Here am I"; for he thought Eli had called him. But Eli answered, "I called thee not, go back and lie down again." Samuel obeyed. But again the same voice was heard, and again Samuel hastened to Eli, saying, "Here am I." Eli bid him return as before, and lie down. It was the voice of the Lord, but the child knew it not. It came to him a third time, and again thinking that it was Eli who called, he hastened to him. Now Eli became aware that it was the Lord's summons, and he said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if it happens that thou art called, thou shalt say, 'Speak, o Lord, for Thy servant hears.'" So Samuel went, and the Lord addressed him as before, "Samuel, Samuel!" Then Samuel answered, "Speak, for Thy servant hears." And the Lord said to Samuel, "Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both ears of every one that hears it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all the things which I have spoken concerning his house; I shall begin and finish. For I have told him, that I will punish his house for ever, for the offence that he knew that his sons made themselves accursed, and restrained them not. And

therefore I swear to the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever." — Samuel lay quietly in his place until the morning. He was afraid to relate the vision of the night. But Eli called him, and bid him tell all fearlessly. After hearing the awful announcement, the old man said humbly, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him."

The Biblical historian appears to linger fondly on the picture of the child-priest in the Tabernacle; he tells us repeatedly, how the Lord blessed, and how the people loved him. Strengthened by the spirit of God, intelligent and high-minded, full of earnest faith and energy, Samuel grew up to become a prophet of the Lord, and the greatest, as he was the last, of the Judges of Israel.

77. CAPTURE AND RETURN OF THE ARK.

[1 Sam. IV—VI.]

The word of solemn warning had gone forth, and the day of sorrow was at hand. The evil deeds of the people and their priests were to meet with a speedy retribution.

The Philistines who had so constantly molested and troubled the Hebrews, invading their territory, seized their harvest fruit, and making raids on their flocks and herds, now reappeared to carry on their usual aggressive warfare. This struggle came to a decisive issue in a hard-fought battle between Aphek and Eben-ézer in the south of Palestine, where the Israelites were defeated with a loss of four thousand men. Now the elders of Israel remembered that in the days of Joshua, the Ark of the Lord had been triumphantly carried at the head of the army, and had always ensured success. Why should it not again prove their aid and rescue? So they went to Shiloh, and demanded that the Ark should be brought to them out of the Tabernacle. Hophni and Phinehas, the two priests, came themselves to

the camp, bearing the sacred shrine between them. Its presence wonderfully restored the drooping courage of the Israelites. As soon as they beheld it, they raised a great cry, so that the earth rang and seemed to tremble. The Philistines heard the shouting and divined the cause. They were sorely afraid, and exclaimed, "Woe unto us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of this mighty God? This is the God who smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness." Yet they ventured out in battle, and fought with desperate courage. The Israelites were again routed: this time thirty thousand of their soldiers were slain, and the rest fled in wild confusion to their tents. Hophni and Phinehas were among the dead, and the pride of Israel, the Ark of the Covenant, was in the hands of their heathen enemy. The people, assembled at Shiloh in a torture of suspense, were awaiting news of the battle. At last towards the evening, there came swiftly running from the camp to the city a Benjamite, with his clothes rent and earth upon his head. Eli sat watching by the way-side as the messenger entered the gates of the town; he heard a loud wail arise. "What does the voice of this tumult mean?" the old man asked, full of evil forebodings. His failing sight would not let him perceive the messenger's rent clothes and his sand-covered head, which told their own tale. Then the Benjamite approached him and said, "I come out from the battle-field, and I have fled to-day from the battle-field." Eli, anxiously interrupting him, enquired, "What is there done, my son?" Then the messenger related fully his sad tidings: "Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the Ark of God is taken." When Eli heard of the fate of the Ark, over which he had watched so many years as the holiest treasure of Israel, he fell backwards from his seat, overcome with

an agony of grief, and died where he fell, ninety eight years old, after having judged the Hebrews for forty years. At the same hour, the wife of Phinehas gave birth to a son, and with her dying breath she called him Ichabod (No-honour), saying, "The glory is departed from Israel." The shame that had fallen on the people, had also broken her heart.

Meanwhile the Philistines carried the Ark of the Covenant exultingly to Ashdod, and placed it in the temple of their god Dagon. On the following morning, they found the image of the idol fallen prostrate upon his face before the Ark. They lifted up the statue, and re-placed it; but on the next day, Dagon had fallen again before the Ark; this time his head and hands were broken off, and were lying upon the threshold. From that day, the threshold of Dagon's temple in Ashdod became a sacred spot, on which neither the priests nor the people of the Philistines dared to tread.

But greater trials were in store for the people of Ashdod. They were severely afflicted with boils and ulcers; and they knew that this was their punishment for trying to keep the Ark of the Lord. Therefore they sent it from Ashdod to Gath; but it had scarcely arrived, when the people of Gath were smitten with the same diseases. It was next taken to Ekron, another great city of the Philistines. The inhabitants of Ekron, warned by the troubles of Ashdod and Gath, were terrified when they saw the Ark. They anxiously desired to send it away at once. The hand of the Lord was heavy upon the people, and they cried bitterly. When the Philistines had been in possession of the Ark for seven months, and had been visited with calamities and misfortunes, they called their priests and their diviners together for council. They determined to restore the Ark to the Israelites. But the heathen priests, eager to appease the Divine wrath

which they had so severely felt, feared to send back the Ark without an offering of atonement. In accordance with their advice, the people made ready a trespass-offering of five golden emerods and five golden mice, representing the plagues by which they had been afflicted, one for each of the Philistine cities or provinces — Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. The jewels were put in a chest, and laid by the side of the Ark. This was then carried out, and placed upon a new cart drawn by two milch cows, which had never borne the yoke before. The priests ordered their countrymen to let the kine go on by themselves: if the animals went eastward towards Beth-shemesh into the land of the Israelites, then the Philistines would know that it was the Lord who had smitten them; but if they went in any other direction, they might believe that their misfortunes were not caused by any sin of theirs. The kine proceeded, lowing as they went, taking the straight road to Beth-shemesh, never turning to the right or to the left. The chiefs of the Philistines followed after them. The wheat-harvest had commenced, and the reapers of Judah who were at work among the corn, saw the procession as it came winding from afar. As they beheld the Ark, they were full of rejoicing; it was as if the glory of their God were returning to them. The beasts stopped in the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite. The Levites lifted the Ark from the cart and placed it on a great stone that was in the field, together with the chest and the golden offerings. They speedily prepared a sacrifice, breaking up the cart for fuel, and slaughtering the kine as a burnt-offering. When the Philistine chiefs had witnessed all this, they returned to Ekron. But the men of Beth-shemesh, negligent and careless, looked upon the holy Ark. The punishment was instantaneous; fifty thousand and seventy persons were struck dead. The Bethshemites, awed and overwhelmed by terror, exclaimed, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God,

and to whom shall He go up from us?" Kirjath-jearim was a neighbouring settlement, mainly built on the hill-side. To the care of an inhabitant of this little town, to Abinadab, the Ark was confided; and his son Eleazar was sanctified as a priest that he might guard the sacred treasure. It remained in the house of Abinadab for twenty years. Thus the pride of the Tabernacle was gone, and Shiloh disappears as a holy place from the Biblical records.

By the events just narrated, the hatred of the Philistines against the Hebrews was not diminished; on the contrary, it menaced, at any moment, to break out again in a fiercer blaze. So the people lived in trembling and despondency, and "the whole house of Israel lamented after the Lord."

78. SAMUEL THE JUDGE.

[1 Sam. VII—X.]

Nearly four hundred years had passed since the Hebrews had conquered Palestine, and their little commonwealth was as disunited as it had ever been, and as disobedient to God. Never was a great master-mind, strong to direct and to rule, so much wanted as at that time. The Israelites required more than a champion, they needed a teacher and a guide. Samuel was that master-mind; he became that teacher and guide; "his word went out to all Israel," and "all Israel, even from Dan to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel was appointed to be the prophet of the Lord."

His home was Ramah, his birthplace; but he went yearly round to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, to judge and instruct the people. His life was pure and blameless; stern with himself as with others, he accepted no bribe, no gifts. He had long ceased to be a ministering priest in the house of God; he had become a "seer", an interpreter of God's will. His name was known throughout Israel, his command was

feared, his intercession entreated. But imbued as he was with God's spirit, he wished to impart it to others, and to diffuse it throughout Israel. He established or improved schools for public teachers or prophets who, by devotion and religious fervour, should promote the enlightenment, the piety, and patriotism of the people. Their influence was exceedingly important, and as a rule wholesome, although we hear constant complaints of "false prophets." As in all eastern institutions of a similar kind, music and dancing were usually employed as means for rousing the religious enthusiasm. The prophets would seize the tabor and harp, and their voice would burst into loud songs, whilst they performed fantastic dances. They were men remarkable for zeal and energy. They warned the people against idolatry and lawlessness, and rebuked the kings for their evil deeds. They announced punishment and predicted blessings. They exhorted to repentance and proclaimed the Divine forgiveness. They attempted to shield religion against the abuse of mere forms and ceremonials, and to strengthen the true piety of the heart. They advised the statesman, and strove to uphold the political dignity and independence of the country.*

Samuel longed to restore unity, peace, and safety to his nation; but he felt that this was impossible as long as idolatrous practices prevailed. Therefore he called the people together, and exhorted them to put away their strange gods, and to return to the Lord with their whole heart. The multitude listened to his earnest appeal, and "they removed the images of Baal and Ashtarte, and served the Lord alone." Then he summoned them to Mizpah for a great public sacrifice and a day of humiliation. The Philistines, hearing of their peaceful assembly, resolved to attack them in their defenceless state, hoping to crush the whole land in one

* See the first chapters of the Second Part.

battle. The affrighted Israelites bid Samuel pray for them. The prophet offered up a burnt sacrifice to the Lord, and invoked Him fervently for the people. As the smoke was rising from the altar, the Philistines approached in battle array; but a terrific storm burst over their heads, and discomfited their army. They turned to flight, and the Israelites pursued them to the southern frontier of the land, and utterly routed them. Samuel set up a memorial stone between Mizpah and Shen, and called the name of the place Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto has the Lord helped us." The Hebrews now easily reconquered all the towns which the enemies had before taken, and even wrested from them a portion of their own territory. Indeed the Philistines were thoroughly subdued and weakened, and did not any more dare to attack the Hebrews during the life-time of Samuel.

While this great and unweariedly active man was in his vigour, the affairs of the commonwealth prospered. But when in the course of years, his powers diminished, he appointed his two sons Joel and Abiah, who dwelt in Beersheba, to assist him as judges. Reckless and utterly depraved, they proved unworthy of their father; they were eager for unjust gain, took bribes, and perverted judgment. The people of Israel looked with grave apprehension into the future: should they entrust their welfare to leaders so unsafe and so contemptible? Their elders went to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "Behold, thou art old and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us, like all the nations."

This thought, expressed at last, must long have lain dormant in the minds of the Hebrews: ever inclined to imitate surrounding nations, wavering and deficient in self-reliance, the tribes of Israel desired one ruler or sovereign, who might enforce obedience, and keep the whole people together with a strong hand. Failing in steadfast faith,

they sought a visible king; and desiring to secure for him absolute authority, they demanded him of Samuel. Full of anxious care and perplexity, himself doubting the wisdom of the people's request, and almost feeling that it involved a virtual rejection of God's rule and a swerving into pagan usages, the prophet sought guidance and enlightenment in prayer. Then God made known to him His will: "Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not be king over them . . . Yet warn them solemnly, and show them the manner of the king that will reign over them." Samuel called the people together, and repeated to them the words of the Lord. He then described plainly what they would have to expect from a monarchical rule. "This will be," he said, "the manner of the king that shall rule over you: he will take your sons, and appoint them for himself for his chariots and for his horsemen, and they will have to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and will set them to plough his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots; and he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers; and he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants; and he will take the tenth of your seed and of your vineyards, and give to his officers and to his servants; and he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your choicest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work; he will take the tenth of your sheep, and you shall be his servants; and you shall cry out in that day on account of your king whom you will have chosen for you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day."—But not even this stern and alarm-

ing picture deterred the people from their purpose; they repeated their demand with petulant impatience: "Nay, we will have a king over us, that we may be like all the other nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." Samuel brought this reply of the people before God, who bid him do as they desired. He then dismissed them to their homes.

79. ELECTION OF SAUL.

[1. Sam. X.]

In the small but valiant tribe of Benjamin, there lived a man named Kish, famous for his wealth. He had a son Saul, distinguished by a fine and manly appearance, a young man of tall and majestic stature, towering above the rest of his townsmen from his shoulders upwards. Kish was rich in herds, and Saul assisted in tending them. It so happened that some asses belonging to Kish had wandered astray and were lost, and that he bid Saul go with one of his servants to recover the animals. The two set out; and passing through Mount Ephraim and the surrounding country, they arrived after a three days' search in the land of Zuph. Their efforts had been fruitless, and Saul said to his servant, "Come and let us return, lest my father leave off caring for the asses, and take thought for us." But the faithful servant suggested to Saul, that a seer, a man of God, dwelt in the neighbourhood, and that perhaps he would be able to tell them which way they ought to take. Saul objected at first, for he had nothing with him to give the prophet, and he would not go to him empty-handed. But the servant replied that he had the fourth part of a silver shekel left, which they could offer as a present. The city was built upon a hill; and as the two began to ascend it, they met some young maidens going out to draw water. Of them they asked, "Is the seer here?" — "Behold, he is before

you," they answered, "make haste now, for he comes to-day to the city, for there is a sacrifice of the people to-day in the high place." So the two hastened up the hill, and at the gates of the town they encountered Samuel. The prophet knew that the youth who stood before him, was to be king over Israel. He was evidently well acquainted with his person and his domestic affairs; he was probably familiar with the gifts and virtues which qualified him for a high and difficult position; and he seemed glad to find now an opportunity for observing him still more closely and making his final choice. So when Saul asked him, "Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is?" he answered, "I am the seer, go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me to-day, and to-morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thy heart. And as for thy asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy heart on them, for they are found. And to whom belongs all the treasure of Israel? Is it not to thee and to thy father's house?" Saul was naturally struck with this unexpected reply, and he answered modestly, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" Then Samuel led Saul and his servant into the chamber of the high place, where the banquet was prepared, and where thirty guests were assembled. All respect was shown to the strangers; to them were given the seats of honour; and not only the largest but the best and most valued portion of the sacrifice had been set apart for Saul, and was now placed before him. Samuel then went to his own house, followed by Saul and his servant. In the pleasant coolness of the evening air, the prophet led Saul to the roof of the house, and spoke with him alone. What did he tell him in that private and quiet interview? Did he communicate to him the "law of the king", his rights

and duties? Did he discuss with him the condition and the prospects of the state? Or did he merely sound and test him, before he finally decided about his aptitude as a ruler of Israel? — On the following morning, Samuel called Saul early, and accompanied him and his attendant to the gate of the city. There he bid the servant pass on and wait for his master; and then turning to Saul, he said to him, "Stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God." He was about to invest him with the holiness of kingship. He took a vial of oil and poured it upon Saul's head, and kissed him, saying; "Behold, the Lord has anointed thee to be chief over His inheritance." Then he foretold minutely what would happen to Saul on his return, how the asses had been found, and how his father Kish was sorrowing for his absence. He, moreover, informed him that, on his way home, he would meet in the plain of Tabor with three men going to the holy place at Bethel with their offerings in their hands, and that they would give him two of the loaves they were carrying; that further on his way, near Gibea-Elohim, where a garrison of Philistines was stationed, he would encounter a company of prophets, descending from the hill with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, all prophesying: then would Saul be endowed with the spirit of God, and he also would prophesy. He was to wait for Samuel at Gilgal during seven days, when he would come and advise him upon all measures that were now to be taken.

The Benjamite youth parted from the prophet, and set forth on his journey. Everything happened as Samuel had predicted. On Mount Tabor, the men gave him their offerings with a foreboding of his royalty, and at Gibea-Elohim the prophets accepted him as one of their company. The spirit of God came upon him; he felt an altered man; the mind of the simple young herdsman was roused

and enlightened as it had never been before, so that the people of his acquaintance asked with astonishment, "What is this that has come to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" So striking was the change that the saying passed into a proverb. At Gibea-Elohim, Saul found also his uncle who had waited for him, and asked anxiously whence he came. Saul related the story of the lost asses and of his visit to Samuel; but all mention of his future kingdom he discreetly omitted: whether he did so on his own account, or by the advice and desire of Samuel, is not recorded.

Meanwhile Samuel called the people together at Mizpah; they came from all the tribes; and having once more solemnly pointed out the gravity of the step they had decided upon, he proceeded to elect their future ruler by the Divine oracle of the lot. The lot fell first upon the tribe of Benjamin, and then upon the family of Matri, next upon the household of Kish, and lastly upon his son Saul. But Saul was not present at the casting of the lots; he was searched for, found at last hidden in the fields, and brought before the assembled tribes. His majestic and comely person struck all beholders. As he approached, Samuel exclaimed, "Do you see him that the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people." A great shout rose up into the air, and for the first time the cry was heard in Israel, "God save the king!"

Saul was accompanied to his house at Gibeah by a band of men, who had already declared themselves his followers, and who brought him presents. Some turbulent and discontented people, however, held aloof, and despised the young king, saying, "How shall this man save us?" But Saul prudently left such taunts unnoticed. Indeed his authority was far from universally acknowledged, though he was perhaps recognised as the leader of his own

tribe. He lived in no regal state; he did not even renounce his habitual occupations as herdsman of his father's cattle. He does not seem to have taken part in the government of the people; he had scarcely the weight or importance of a Judge; for the voice of Samuel still held the nation in sway. The anointed king was overshadowed by the inspired prophet. A great occasion was required to give him distinction and power. That occasion did not tarry to present itself.

VII. THE REIGN OF SAUL.

(1095—1055.)

80. SAUL'S WARS.

[1 Sam. XI–XIV.]

Not only were the Philistines again making constant progress in the land of the Israelites, stationing their garrisons with impunity in the very heart of the country, but the heathen nations to the east of the Jordan likewise threatened and attacked the Hebrew tribes that had settled in those isolated parts.

A barbarous incident in this unequal warfare was destined to rouse the dormant energies of Saul, and to establish his greatness. Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had assaulted and besieged the city of Jabesh in Gilead. He promised to make peace with the inhabitants, on condition that he would "cut out all their right eyes", as a sign of reproach to the people of Israel. The elders of Jabesh, well aware that they were too weak to hold out against the forces of Nahash, begged for a respite of seven days, at the end of which time, should they remain unaided, they would undergo the cruel disgrace with which they had been threatened. The messengers from Jabesh Gilead turned first to Gibeah,

the residence of Saul. They had heard that he had been elected and anointed by their great and wise prophet Samuel. They supposed, therefore, that, even if he were not recognised as king of Israel by all the tribes, he must possess considerable power and influence. They arrived breathless in Gibeah, and told their tale of anguish to the people, who received it with a loud wail. Saul was absent, tending the herds of his father. When he returned in the evening from the fields, bitter cries of distress struck upon his ear. When he learnt the cause, his burning anger was aroused. His kingly nature awoke. He sent his summons round. He ordered a yoke of oxen to be hewn into pieces, one of which was sent to each of the tribes of Israel with this message: "Whosoever comes not after Saul and after Samuel —so shall it be done to his oxen." This was the muster-call, rude but powerful, a mirror of the age. The people responded nobly; they rose as one man, and assembled at Bezek, an army of three hundred and thirty thousand men. Saul placing himself at their head, marched to the succour of Jabesh. The Ammonites were defeated with terrible slaughter, put to flight, and scattered.

This glorious victory secured the fame and authority of Saul. So great was the enthusiasm which it kindled among the people, that, anxious to show their devotion, they offered to put to death those who had formerly despised him. Saul rejected this revengeful proposal; his new reign should not be stained with the blood of any of his subjects. On the contrary, he ordered feasts of public rejoicing to be held, and sacrifices to be offered to God at Gilgal. All the people assembled round their king Saul and their prophet Samuel. There at Gilgal, the voice of the old leader was heard once more by the Israelites. In a forcible appeal, Samuel reviewed his past life, and called upon the nation to bear witness to his integrity and self-denial. He then gave a

short sketch of the dangers and misfortunes which, through God's help, they and their ancestors had overcome, from the time they left Egypt down to the recent discomfiture of Nahash and his army. He described their constant disobedience and sinfulness, which they had lately crowned by their obstinate demand for a visible monarch, whereas God should be their only ruler. To atone for all past failings, he implored both the king and the people, to adhere firmly to their faith in God, and to act in submission to His behests. Honour, happiness, and prosperity were within their grasp, if they were obedient to Him. But if not, then His hand would be heavy against them, as it had often been against their fathers.

To prove to the people that he had spoken by Divine command, Samuel called down a sign from heaven. It was the season of the wheat-harvest, and the sky was a vault of serene, unbroken blue. Yet suddenly a terrific storm of thunder and lightning and rain burst forth. The affrighted people, thinking that this was a mark of Divine anger, expressed their repentance for having desired a king; but Samuel re-assured them, only exhorting them to revere God and to serve Him in truth. "But if you act wickedly," he concluded, "you shall be consumed both you and your king."

Before his campaign against the Ammonites, Saul appears as a young and simple husbandman living in his father's house; but now he is depicted as the true ruler of his people, with a body-guard of 3,000 men, and as the chief of a household of his own. We hear of his wife Ahinoam, of his three sons Jonathan, Ishui, and Melchi-shua, and of his two daughters Merab and Michal. He had made Abner his cousin, the son of Ner, the captain of his army. He shared the body-guard with his eldest son Jonathan, for we are told that "a thousand men were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin."

And this Jonathan, so casually mentioned, has become the darling hero of all readers of the Bible, the ideal of youthful excellence, the embodiment of unswerving devotion, of self-sacrificing friendship, of generous chivalry. He was rich in modesty and grace, endowed with the spirit of courage and enterprise, brave, loyal, tender-hearted, a lover of adventure and heroic feats, but above all of a stainless purity of soul that shines, a bright star, through the night of those remote ages. He took an active part in the campaign that had now become urgent against the Philistines, the arch-enemies of the Israelites. They had succeeded in obtaining a firm footing in the land, they had established their encampments at Gibeah, at Geba, and at Michmash, and they had taken possession of the pass of Beth-horon. Saul was determined to expel them from the Hebrew territory. Among the first who achieved a success in this warfare was Jonathan, who defeated the enemy's garrison at Geba. The deed was loudly announced by the blast of the trumpet; for Saul exclaimed, "Let the Hebrews hear!" The Philistines were by this defeat stung to vigorous action; they assembled a vast army at Michmash, 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and other soldiers numerous "as the sand which is upon the sea-shore." The Israelites, sorely afraid of the crushing power of this immense host, left their homes and peaceful pursuits; women hid themselves in caves and thickets, among rocks and in mountain-clefts; others fled beyond the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead.

81. SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE.

[1 Sam. XV.]

Saul was at Gilgal waiting for Samuel, who had promised to come in order to offer up the usual sacrifices previous to the march of the Hebrew army. Many resolute men

had rallied round him. For seven days, he expected the arrival of the prophet in vain. At last he grew impatient; the people, anxious and terrified, began to withdraw from him, and the Philistines were pressing hard for a battle. He could no longer tarry with safety; and reluctantly assuming the office of priest, he presented the burnt- and the peace-offering himself. While these ceremonies were being performed, Samuel appeared. He listened to Saul's explanation, but reproved him sternly for what he pronounced to be a violation of God's ordinances, and declared that the kingdom which had been granted to him and his house for ever, would, owing to his disobedience, be taken from him; for "the Lord has selected for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has appointed him to be ruler over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee." Saul listened to this severe and unexpected announcement with unmurmuring resignation. He offered no word of reply. He had accepted his elevation from Samuel; he had now to bear from him rebuke and humiliation. Yet so little did he, even in this trying moment, think of himself, that his whole attention was centred in his duties as military leader against the menacing Philistines. — He stood with his son Jonathan on the heights of Gibeah, surrounded by a little band of six hundred men; the Ark of the Lord had been brought into the camp, and was in the care of Achiah, a grand-child of Eli.

So despotic had been the rule of the Philistines in Canaan, that no smith had been allowed to ply his trade among the Hebrews, lest "they make for themselves swords and spears." The Israelites were obliged to come to the Philistines to sharpen their plough-shares and their axes, their spades, forks, and other iron implements. "So it came to pass in the day of battle that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people

that were with Saul and Jonathan; but with Saul and with Jonathan his son alone they were found." How complete and how degrading does the dependence of the Hebrews appear in the light of this simple statement!

The Philistine forces were entrenched between steep and precipitous heights divided from Gibeah by a narrow valley; rocks rose upon each side of this valley like a natural fortification. It occurred to the ardent and adventure-loving Jonathan to try and cause a panic among the Philistine soldiers by surprising them. It was a daring scheme, which he confided to his devoted armour-bearer alone: "Come and let us go over to the garrison of these heathens; it may be that the Lord will work for us; for there is no difficulty for the Lord to save by many or by few." The servant's answer proves the faithful love he bore to his young master: "Do all that is in thy heart; turn, behold, I am with thee; according to thy heart." "Behold", said Jonathan, "we will pass over to these men, and we will show ourselves to them. If they say thus to us, Tarry until we come to you, then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up to them. But if they say thus, Come up to us, then we will go up; for the Lord has delivered them into our hands, and this shall be the sign to us."

Intrepid and dauntless, the two men secretly left the camp at Gibeah. They crept in silence along the projecting rocks, until at last they emerged from their shelter, and stood in full view of the Philistine garrison that was drawn up on the heights of Michmash. They were seen by the enemy, who naturally took them for some of those Hebrews who had been concealing themselves in the clefts and caves, and were now cautiously coming forth from their hiding places. They shouted down mockingly, "Come up to us, and we will show you a thing!" The words spoken

as a taunt were welcomed as a happy augury; Jonathan and his companion commenced the toilsome ascent, and climbed up on their hands and feet from crag to crag, until at last they stood before the garrison. Jonathan vigorously attacked the outposts; his devoted armour-bearer followed his example; at the first assault twenty men were slain; disorder spread in the camp; terror fell upon the Philistine soldiers; "the earth quaked", relates the Bible, "and it was a very great trembling."

From the camp at Gibeah, Saul beheld the confusion and heard the tumult. He naturally suspected that some of his men had secretly attacked the heathen hosts. He counted over his army, and finding that Jonathan and his armour-bearer were missing, he at once hastened to their rescue with his band of 600 soldiers. He was speedily joined by great numbers who now poured forth from their rocky caverns to take part in the war of deliverance. The Philistines were quickly beaten back from Michmash, and hotly chased to Bethaven and Ajalon, the pursuit lasting from morning till nightfall.

Saul had vowed at the beginning of the battle, that no man should taste food ere the enemies were completely scattered and their army destroyed. Jonathan was absent when this vow was made. As the youth, faint and exhausted with the exertions of the day, was passing through a wood, he dipped his staff into the wild honey that was overflowing on the ground, and refreshed himself. Not so the warriors of the army who, aware of Saul's solemn warning, abstained from nourishment throughout the day. When they returned at night from the pursuit, they threw themselves eagerly upon the captured flocks and herds of the Philistines, slew them in haste, and consumed them with their blood, contrary to the Divine command which forbids the Hebrews to eat the flesh of animals "with their souls", that

is, their blood. When Saul heard of this trespass of the people, he bid them take a large stone, upon which they might slay the animals and allow the blood to flow out. After this rapid midnight meal, Saul erected the first altar, after which he intended without delay to resume the pursuit of the Philistines. But before carrying this somewhat dangerous plan into execution, he asked counsel of God, but he received no sign nor answer that night. Then he knew that there was a sinner in the camp, who had not atoned for his trespass; and in his eager zeal he exclaimed, "As the Lord lives who saves Israel, though it be my son Jonathan, he shall surely die." The people divined what the sin was, and who had committed it, but no man spoke. The usual mode of discovering the offender by lot was resorted to. The lots were cast and Jonathan was found guilty. "Tell me what thou hast done," Saul asked of his son. The youth answered truthfully and resignedly, "I did but taste a little honey with the end of the staff that was in my hand, and behold, I must die!" In the stern old spirit of Jephthah, Saul exclaimed, "So may God do to me now and further—thou must surely die, Jonathan!" Then the people could no longer restrain their pent-up feelings; they were exasperated at the thought of losing their beloved comrade, their bright example of valour and goodness; and indignantly and resolutely they said to Saul, "Shall Jonathan die, who has wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid! As the Lord lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he has wrought with God this day." Could Saul resist? Must his heart not have glowed with twofold joy—at the rescue of his son, and the love which his virtues had won for him? So Jonathan was delivered, and cherished with deeper affection than ever.

This great success over the Philistines was followed by triumphs over other neighbouring nations. Indeed the

warfare continued almost incessantly. Saul was, therefore, obliged to strengthen his army by enrolling as many men of valour and spirit as he could secure, and to be careful in the selection of able generals. The Bible thus briefly but expressively relates the wars of Saul: "So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he humbled them. And he gathered a host, . . . and delivered Israel out of the hands of those who spoiled them."

The Amalekites alone had not been attacked. Yet they belonged to the fiercest and most implacable enemies of the Hebrews. Therefore Samuel insisted upon a war of extermination against them and their cruel king Agag. The people were to be utterly destroyed, men and women, infants and children, even their herds and flocks. Saul called out a vast army, mustering 200,000 men, and marched into the territory of the Amalekites. He seized their principal towns and caused a fearful massacre of the people, showing mercy only to the Kenites who lived in Amalekite territory, and a part of whom had, from the time of Moses, exhibited a friendly feeling towards the Hebrews. But he spared the life of king Agag, and, urged by his men, he saved also the finest flocks and herds, reserving them for offerings to the Lord.

Samuel naturally watched the progress of the war with eagerness. He heard a faithful account of every incident — he heard of Saul's victories and also of what he considered his weakness and contumacy. His anger was roused and his resolution speedily taken. He at once proceeded to meet the king, whom he found at Gilgal. Saul, being told of the prophet's approach, went out and received him with this

greeting, "Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord." But Samuel answered sternly, "What means then this bleating of sheep in my ear, and the lowing of oxen which I hear?" — "They have brought them from the Amalekites," answered Saul calmly, "for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." But Samuel inexorably pointed out Saul's open disobedience: he had received God's distinct command completely to annihilate the Amalekites and their possessions; he had put his own judgment against the will of God; he had committed an unpardonable sin. Again Saul meekly objected that the people had spared the oxen and the sheep for no other purpose than to sacrifice them to the true God. This reply called forth the noble and sublime utterance singularly characteristic of the seer, words that have been repeated again and again by later prophets and by ministers of God in every age and country: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams!" And Samuel added with his old and vehement energy, "Because thou hast rejected the voice of the Lord, He has also rejected thee from being king." Then Saul acknowledged that he had sinned, and anxiously implored Samuel to pray with him to the Lord, so that he might be pardoned. But the prophet turned away relentlessly. In his agony of despair and humiliation, Saul laid hold of Samuel's mantle, and clung to it entreatingly until it rent. "And Samuel said to him, The Lord has rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and has given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for He is not a man that He should repent." Saul said again, "I have sinned; yet honour me now, I pray

thee, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and turn once more with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God." Samuel yielded at last to this request, and both performed their devotions together.

Agag, the king of the Amalekites, was then summoned before the prophet: he knew that his last hour had arrived, but he felt his reverses sweetened by the disgrace of his conqueror and enemy; so he came before Saul merrily, exclaiming, "See, the bitterness of death is past." But Samuel said, "As thy sword has made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women." And "Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal." — On that day Saul and Samuel parted, and they never met again as political leaders. The prophet's path no more crossed that of the king. Yet Samuel mourned deeply for the fallen Saul.

But this rejected king, how did he bear his humiliation? Did it leave no sting behind? His future life tells of it but too clearly. He seems to have brooded over the prophet's sentence until he fell alternately into revengeful rage and moody despondency, now meditating the punishment of the despotic Samuel, whose tool he imagined himself to have been from the beginning, and now venting his fury against his most faithful friends, his nearest kinsmen, even against himself. It is a sad picture — the majestic, brave, and generous king wrecked in dignity, fortune, and mind, a pitiful shadow of his better self!

VIII. THE LIFE AND TIMES OF DAVID.

82. YOUTH OF DAVID.

[1 Sam. XVI—XXIII.]

Entwined with the life of Saul, and closely connected with the story of his children, is the life of David. The grace and spirit of God seemed gradually withdrawn from Saul, to reappear in the career of David. As the strength of the one decayed and withered away, the other took root in the hearts of the people. As clouds and darkness gathered over the close of Saul's life, the sunshine of hope and fame burst over the youth of David. This David, the shepherd, the sweet musician, and inspired poet; the warrior and the hero of a hundred romantic adventures; the friend of the noble-minded Jonathan; at last the king, the victor in numberless battles; the man of sublime virtues and great passions; now rising to the height of human excellence and now sinking to the depth of human weakness and sin; the unhappy and much-tried father — is perhaps the most remarkable personage portrayed in the Scriptures.

There lived in Bethlehem-Judah a man of the name of Jesse, a descendant of Ruth, the good Moabite woman. He had eight sons, the youngest of whom was David, "the dear

one", "the beloved", small in stature, but of beautiful countenance. To his care were entrusted his father's flocks. He led them out upon the rugged hills of Judah, tended them watchfully, and guarded them by his valour from the wild beasts that haunted the mountains. Often a lion or a bear would come, and attempt to carry off a lamb from his fold: then the young shepherd, who knew no fear, ventured to struggle with the lion or the bear, seized the fierce animal with dauntless power, and rescued the lamb from its mouth. Thus, by nature, brave and daring, he was inured to hardships, trained to climb the steep and rocky mountain side, and braced to endure any danger and fatigue. During those early years, passed chiefly in solitude, and surrounded by grand and beautiful scenes, his innate love for the sublime and the poetical was naturally fostered; and we can well imagine that, impressionable and impassioned as he was, he felt often inspired to pour forth his soul in poetry and song. All his effusions had a religious colouring; they glorified God, the Creator of all things, the Lord of all nature, whose power and wisdom spoke to him both in the towering peak and in the lovely valley. It is not surprising that one so variedly and so highly gifted — one equally remarkable for strength and courage, as for eloquence and all the graces of art — should have been looked upon from his youth as destined for a high mission, as intended to play a great part in the history of his nation. This certainly was the opinion of Samuel, whose superior judgment had even gained by age and experience.

The Bible thus tells the story of the anointing of David: "And the Lord said to Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thy horn with oil, and go, and I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite; for I have provided for Myself a

king among his sons." When Samuel objected and pleaded Saul's anger, who would surely kill him if he heard of his errand and its object, he was instructed to say, that he came to Bethlehem merely to present an offering. So Samuel went, taking with him his horn of sacred oil. When the venerable man, so solemn in appearance and bearing, approached, the people were afraid and asked him, "Comest thou peaceably?" Samuel replied that he had come to offer up a sacrifice, and bid all sanctify themselves and be present at the ceremony. Among the people were Jesse and seven of his sons; David was absent tending the sheep. As the brothers arrived, Eliab, the eldest of them, a tall and comely youth, met first the eye of Samuel. The prophet, remembering that Saul had been chosen for his imposing stature, thought within himself, that this was surely the Lord's anointed. But the grace of God was not given to this youth. Samuel heard the Divine voice, "The Lord sees not as man sees, for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." Then the other six sons of Jesse passed before Samuel; but none of them was the chosen one of the Lord. The prophet asked Jesse whether he had no other sons? And Jesse replied, he had one more, the youngest of all, who was in the fields keeping the flocks. Samuel requested that this youngest son should be brought before him. It was David. As he appeared before Samuel, ruddy, with beautiful eyes and heart-winning grace, the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he!" Samuel took his horn, and anointed David at once in the midst of his brothers. "And the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward."

But "the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." Dark and terrible were the days now in store for the forsaken king overshadowed by a gloomy cloud, cast down by

tormenting sadness. His servants, seeing these symptoms with sorrow and alarm, proposed to find some skilful player on the harp, who with sweet sounds might soothe his troubled mind. Saul consented, and the young shepherd David, renowned for his gift of music, was sent for: he came from his flocks, bringing as a present to the king from his father Jesse an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid. Saul from the first loved him; and when he felt depressed by the evil spirit, he ordered him to take his harp and play, and he was cheered. David accompanied the king everywhere, and was soon made his armour-bearer. But it appears that he did not remain long with Saul; he must after a while have returned to his father's house and to his old occupations; for it is as a shepherd that we hear next of him.

83. DAVID AND GOLIATH.

[1 Sam. XVII.]

The Philistines, although repeatedly defeated by Saul, were neither subdued nor apparently much weakened, and they again determined upon a war of aggression. They entered the territory of Judah, and pitched their camp in a hilly country between Shochoh and Azekah, eastward of their own town Ekron. Saul entrenched himself with his men on an opposite height. A wide valley separated the two armies. The Philistines had among them, as their principal champion, a man of Gath, Goliath by name, a soldier whose towering form, "six cubits and a span" high, was a well-known object of dread to the Hebrews. His panoply of war is minutely described: he had a helmet of brass; his coat of mail which was also of brass, weighed five thousand shekels; he wore greaves of the same metal upon his legs, and carried a brazen javelin between his shoulders;

the staff of his spear resembled in size a weaver's beam, while the iron point of that weapon weighed six hundred shekels. Thus armed, the giant appeared constantly before the camp of the Hebrews, and shouted forth, "I defy the armies of Israel this day: give me a man that we may fight together. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall you be our servants, and serve us." For forty days did the ruthless warrior thus challenge the Israelites; but not one of Saul's men ventured to answer the summons to the formidable single combat, upon the issue of which so much was to depend.

The three eldest sons of Jesse had followed the king to the war, while David had remained at home tending the flocks as usual. One day he was charged by his father to proceed to the camp with provisions for his brothers and their captain, and to return speedily with news of their welfare. The two armies were drawn up in battle array in front of each other, and just as David ran up to salute his brothers, the terrible Philistine champion stepped out before the line, and repeated his insulting speech as before. The men of Israel shrank back in fear. David, who had been listening intently to the words of Goliath, turned to question those near him what all this meant; who that giant was? and what would be the reward of the man who killed him? Upon which he was told that the king would give the conqueror great riches, marry him to his daughter, and declare his father's house free from all burdens. Eliab had noticed that his youngest brother was in eager conversation with some of the soldiers; and well aware of his daring and intrepid spirit, he upbraided him with angry vehemence: "Why hast thou come down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy presumption and the wicked-

ness of thy heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle!" But David, though conciliatory to his brothers, remained firm in his purpose. This was reported to Saul, who summoned the youth before his presence. There he persisted in his resolution, and said: "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Saul answered compassionately, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou art but a boy, and he is a man of war from his youth." Then David, anxious to obtain the king's consent, related his successful encounters with the lion and the bear, and concluded, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." Yielding at last, Saul said, "Go, and the Lord be with thee."

David was clad in the king's armour, and Saul presented him with his spear and his sword; but the shepherd boy could hardly walk in the large and ponderous coat of mail; so he laid it off, and prepared for the difficult combat in his own manner. He took his staff in one hand, and his sling in the other; and choosing five smooth stones out of the brook, he put them into his shepherd's bag or scrip, which he threw round his shoulder. Thus armed, he drew near to Goliath. The Philistine came forth, preceded by his armour-bearer; but when he saw the fair and ruddy youth of small stature, he exclaimed disdainfully: "Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves?" and he cursed him by his gods. "Come to me," he continued, "and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field." But David, conscious of his good cause, and inspired by it to a sublime courage, replied, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast

defied. . . . And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands." The Philistine, enraged by this bold reply, advanced towards his opponent. Now David quickly drew a stone from his bag, and placing it in his sling, flung it against the forehead of the Philistine. It pierced the giant's head, who fell upon his face to the ground. Running near and grasping the large sword of his fallen foe, David slew him, and cut off his head. At this sight, the Philistine hosts were seized with consternation; they turned and fled in wild confusion; the Hebrews followed in rapid pursuit, and pressed the fugitives on as far as Ekron and Gath. When they returned, they were received with shouts of triumph and rejoicing. David, carrying the head of Goliath in his hand, was brought before Saul, who apparently did not recognise in him the skilful harp-player, for he asked him, "Whose son art thou, young man?" And he answered, "I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." Saul would not let David return to his father's house from that day. And then commenced that noble friendship between the king's son and the future king of Israel, which the Bible records in these simple but expressive words: "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. . . Then Jonathan and David made a covenant; and Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and his bow, and to his girdle."

84. DAVID PERSECUTED BY SAUL.

[1 Sam. XVIII—XXIV.]

David was now frequently sent out by Saul on military expeditions; he was successful in whatever he undertook, and was held in honour and respect both by the courtiers and the people. But a slight incident, unduly magnified by the king's morbidness, soon disturbed the friendly relations between Saul and David. As both returned together to Gibeah, after the pursuit and slaughter of the Philistines, the women came forth out of their tents to meet the conquerors with singing and dancing, with tabrets and harps and cymbals. They played, and sang to one another, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Alas! for the evil spirit that was upon Saul; it took, in this instance, the form of jealousy, which was keenly aroused by those words. "He will have even the kingdom!" he exclaimed; and he looked from that day upon David with uneasiness and distrust. The old gloom settled upon him more darkly; it could now no more be chased away by music; David's harp had lost its charm. Nay one day when David was playing to him as usual, Saul threw his javelin at his head, intending to kill him. David happily eluded the thrust of the weapon twice, and hastened out of the king's presence. Afraid of the young warrior, and yet not daring to attack his life again, because he saw that God's favour was with him, Saul removed him from his household, and made him captain over a thousand men, in the hope that the dangers and chances of war would accomplish what he desired. With this object, he sent him forth to do battle against the Philistines, promising him the hand of his daughter Merab as the reward of his victories. David was victorious, yet Merab was given in marriage to Adriel the Meholathite.

Saul had a second daughter Michal, who loved David devotedly. When he was told of her affection, he feigned approval, and openly encouraged David in his hopes, trusting that he might thus ensnare him in a fatal combat with the ruthless Philistines. But David said discreetly, "Does it seem to you a small thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?" But the servants of Saul told David that the king wished indeed to give him his daughter in marriage, and that the only dowry he required would be a hundred lives of the Philistines. So David went forth and slew the enemy. Returning with double the demanded trophies, he claimed Michal for his wife. Saul's fears grew, as David's military triumphs became more numerous and more brillant, till the hostility was fanned into hatred. It became so violent and so unrestrained, that he once more resolved to kill him; and it was only on the earnest and pathetic entreaties of Jonathan, who reminded him of David's important services, that he desisted from his criminal purpose, and became even reconciled with the youthful hero. But the friendly intercourse did not last long. Another war broke out against the Philistines. David was as courageous and successful as ever. This roused Saul's envy to such a degree, that again, in a fit of ungovernable fury, he attempted to slay him with his javelin. David was alarmed, and sought refuge in his own house. There, however, he was followed by the king's messengers, who were ordered to prevent his escape. Michal, justly fearing for the life of her husband, caused him to escape through a window, and thus to elude his pursuers. She then took an image of the Teraphim, laid it in David's bed, and covered it. When Saul's messengers came to her demanding that David should be given up to them, she said that he was ill; and when they had reported this reply, they returned with the king's orders, "Bring him up to me in the bed, that I

may slay him." Then she led them into the room, and showed them the image in the bed. Saul upbraided his daughter, but she pleaded that David had threatened to kill her on the spot, unless she sent him away unharmed.

Meanwhile David had proceeded for protection to Samuel in Ramah, whence, for greater safety, both soon afterwards went to Naioth. Thither also the implacable king sent his men with peremptory commands to bring the fugitive back to Gibeah; but as they approached Naioth, and came to one of the schools of prophets founded by Samuel, they were suddenly filled with religious ardour, and joining Samuel and his disciples, they stayed and prophesied. Seeing that they did not come back, Saul again sent messengers, but these also were seized by the Divine spirit, and did not return. For the third time, royal delegates came to Naioth, and they remained and were inspired as the others had been. Then Saul went himself to Ramah, and asked the people, Where are Samuel and David? When he was told, that they were at Naioth, he at once set out towards this place; and as he approached the town, the spirit of God descended upon him, and his soul was stirred to its very depths. He came before Samuel in a state of frenzied enthusiasm; stripping off his clothes, he lay fasting before him through all that day and the following night.

David remained but a short time in Naioth. He was a man of action, and could not remain long in seclusion, associating only with the prophets and musicians trained and led by Samuel. He secretly returned to Gibeah, and came to Jonathan with a tone of deep despair in his cry: "What have I done, what is my iniquity, and what is my sin before thy father that he seeks my life?" Jonathan endeavoured to comfort him, but it was in vain; for David knew full well that Saul would leave nothing untried to

take his life. Jonathan resolved to ascertain his father's designs. On the morrow was the first day of the New-moon, on which it was customary for the king to feast with his court. David was expected to take part in the banquet as usual; but he determined to remain away, on the plea that he had gone to Bethlehem, to be present at the yearly sacrifice of his family. 'Should this reason satisfy Saul, it would be considered a favourable sign for David; but should it kindle his anger, then he would know that his life was in danger. Jonathan agreed to this plan, and bade David hide himself in the fields by the stone Ezel. Thither he would return to him after the feast, and there he would let him know by a pre-arranged sign, whether he might approach Saul or ought to flee. — In this time of harassing anxiety and affliction, the two friends renewed their vows of attachment. Jonathan, well divining the future greatness of David and the decline of his own family, fervently said: "The Lord be with thee as He has been with my father; but do not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever; no, not when the Lord has cut off the enemies of David, every one from the face of the earth." So "then Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the Lord even require it at the hand of David's enemies. . . . And as regards the matter of which thou and I have spoken, behold, the Lord be between thee and me for ever."

At the banquet, at which, besides Jonathan, also Abner, the captain of the host, and other men of distinction were present, David's place was unoccupied. The king thought, he might have been prevented by some chance or unavoidable accident. But when the seat was empty on the following day likewise, he asked Jonathan, "Why did the son of Jesse not come to the meal, neither yesterday nor to-day?" Jonathan

mentioned the annual sacrifice which was being solemnized by Jesse's house at Bethlehem. Then Saul's wrath was suddenly roused; he burst into uncontrollable rage, both at the innocent Jonathan and at his friend. He commanded his son to bring David at once before him, that he might slay him with his own hand. Jonathan calmly replied, "Why shall he be killed? What has he done?" This answer so exasperated the unhappy Saul that in his madness he cast his javelin at his son. Jonathan rose from the table in sorrow and shame. Unconcerned about the great danger to which he himself was exposed, "he was grieved for David, because his father had disgraced him." On the following morning he went out into the field where he knew David was hidden, and was followed by a servant who carried his arrows, ostensibly with the purpose of shooting at the target. Advancing to the stone of Ezel, where David lay concealed, he bade the boy stand and observe on which side of the stone the shafts would fall, as he shot them. As the missile sprang from the bow, Jonathan exclaimed, "Is not the arrow beyond thee?" To the ears of the fugitive David, these words, according to his agreement with Jonathan, conveyed this meaning—"Saul will slay thee." The boy picked up the arrow for his master, and was then sent back to the city. When he was out of sight, David issued from his hiding place, and the two friends met — the king's son and the king's successor. Did they feel that this was almost their last meeting? For a long time, they remained silent; they wept bitterly in each other's arms; they were unable to restrain their grief, but it was too heavy for words. At length Jonathan spoke. "Go in peace," said he, "and it remains as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever!" So they parted—David to flee and to wander home-

lessly, Jonathan to return to the royal town and to his father's palace, feeling as though it were he who was going into banishment.

From this moment until the death of Saul, David's life becomes one unbroken chain of remarkable adventures. It is the very type of the romantic chronicles of all later heroes of chivalry, which are often recalled to us by David's hairbreadth escapes from a thousand perils, by his daring, his courage, his generous treatment of Saul, his subtle ingenuity and ready invention. Marvellous was the charm he exercised over those around him, the charm acquired by superiority of mind, strength of will, and soaring ambition. From his earliest days, he called forth the admiration and unwavering submission of many who looked upon him as their natural counsellor, guide, and protector.

He seems at first to have intended seeking shelter in his father's house; for we hear of him in Nob, which lies about half-way between Gibeah and Bethlehem. Nob was at that time a holy place, distinguished by the common Sanctuary and a numerous priesthood. Weak and almost fainting from his long flight, David appeared before the priest Ahimelech, who knew him well as the captain, friend, and son-in-law of Saul, and who had often ere now consulted for him the Divine oracle. To account for his coming without troops, body-guard, or attendant, David feigned to be on a private mission for the king. He asked Ahimelech for some bread. The priest had nothing but the cakes that had been removed from the Shew-bread table in the Tabernacle; he hesitated to profane them by giving them to a non-Levite. But David overruled his scruples. He then asked for a sword; and as there was none in the place except that which he had himself taken from the giant Goliath, and which had been preserved ever since in the Sanctuary, David, exclaim-

ing, "There is none like it", at once took possession of it, and hastily departed. But all that he had done in Nob had been carefully observed and noticed by the vigilant and suspicious eyes of Doeg the Edomite, whose treachery was soon to be revealed.

David must indeed have been in great perplexity; for he saw no alternative but to flee to Gath, a chief town of his bitterest enemies, the Philistines, with the very sword of their slaughtered champion at his side. He hoped that he would not be recognised, and that he might be permitted to stay in the town as a helpless stranger. But his hope proved false; the servants of Achish, the king of Gath, said to their master, "Is not this David, the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands?" When David heard this, he was justly afraid. To save himself, he pretended madness, well knowing that idiots were held inviolable as smitten but protected by the deity. Thus he was allowed to leave the town in peace.

He then escaped eastward, and sought refuge in one of the caves near Adullam, in the plain of Judah, between Bethlehem and Hebron. It was a secure retreat, where his brothers and all his father's house came to see him. His solitary abode was soon known, and he was joined by many that were in distress, or in debt, or had any other cause of discontent: they flocked to him, because they trusted to his valour and wisdom to save them from their troubles, or at least to shield them against persecution. Thus four hundred men were gathered round him, over whom he had supreme command, like a great outlaw captain. He then proceeded to Mizpeh in the land of Moab, and entreated the king to afford shelter to his father and mother, as long as his own fate was so uncertain and full of danger. The

heathen monarch consented. Then David, advised by the prophet Gad, who was faithfully attached to him, went with his followers to encamp in the forest of Hareth in Judah.

Saul meanwhile was anxiously waiting for news about David, of whose movements he was entirely ignorant. One day he was sitting, spear in hand, beneath a tamarisk-tree at Gibeah, surrounded by his ministers and councillors. He addressed them irritably and angrily: he was a stranger, he said, among his own family and his own people; his son had made a covenant with his chief enemy; and his subjects were awaiting the elevation to the throne of that foe, because they expected that he would give to all of them fields and vineyards and high military posts; no one had ever taken to heart the king's vexation, and had given him the least tidings of David. Then Doeg the Edomite stepped forward, and related all he had seen of David in Nob, and of Ahimelech, the priest's, readiness in giving him bread and Goliath's sword. Saul's rage was kindled by this account; he sent at once for Ahimelech and all the priests of Nob. They came at his bidding, and were fiercely upbraided for their treacherous and disloyal conduct in favouring David's flight. Ahimelech replied calmly and truthfully, "Who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, who is the king's son-in-law, and goes out at thy bidding, and is honoured in thy house? Was it then the first time that I enquired of God for him? Be it far from me, let not the king impute anything to his servant, nor to all the house of my father, for thy servant knew nothing of all this, neither little nor much." But Saul in his passion ordered the instant death of the priests. No Hebrew could be found to commit so impious a crime. Doeg the Edomite alone consented to execute the horrible command. Ahimelech and all his guiltless priests, eighty

five in number, were slain on that day; the city of Nob was taken, and all living beings found therein were massacred—"both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep." One man alone escaped — Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech; he fled to David with the Ephod which he had saved from the general destruction. He was cordially received, and remained with the fugitive, sharing his perils and his wanderings, and making known to him the Divine oracles.

Moved by patriotism and full of generous courage, David next undertook an expedition against the Philistines, who were pilfering the granaries of Keilah, a city in Judah. He inspired his comparatively small band of followers, at first timid and reluctant, with his own martial ardour, attacked the Philistines vigorously, and drove them back with great slaughter. After having thus rescued Keilah by a daring exploit, his own life was in danger from its ungrateful inhabitants. When Saul heard what David had done, and that he was within a town with gates and walls, he considered it a good opportunity for enclosing and seizing him, and resolved to march out against Keilah. But David, distrustful of the people, who would surely have delivered him up to the king, and warned by a Divine oracle, hastily departed, and fled with his 600 followers to the desert land south of Hebron, where the wilderness of Ziph and that of Maon, afforded welcome retreats and hiding-places. When Saul heard that David had left Keilah, he desisted from the intended expedition.

It was in the wilderness of Ziph that Jonathan had one last stealthy interview with David. He came full of affection and solicitude, and "strengthened David's courage with God". He felt how much his friend, surrounded as he was by difficulties and privations, needed encouragement, in

order to remain steadfast and trustful, and not to despair of a better future. "Fear not," he said, "for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee, and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I will be next to thee, and that also Saul my father knows." In that lonely wilderness of Ziph, the outlaw and the king's son confirmed their old vows, and there they parted for ever.

While dwelling in the desert of Ziph, David nearly fell into the grasp of Saul; for some persons living in the neighbouring districts, went up to Gibeah, and betrayed his retreat to the king. When David heard of Saul's approach, he left Ziph, and sought safety in the more distant wilderness of Maon. Saul pursued and discovered him, and would surely have enclosed him and all his men, had not the sudden alarm of a Philistine invasion compelled him to a hasty return, in order to meet the enemy. But David proceeded to Engedi, eastward of Hebron, where he could hope to find a secure stronghold in the rocky cliffs on the shore of the Dead Sea. When Saul had returned from chastising the Philistines, he resumed his pursuit of David with fresh ardour. He took with him three thousand men, and with this host he scoured the mountains, searching for David from rock to rock, and from cave to cave.

Once in this desperate chase, Saul fell into the hands of David. The wearied king had entered a cave to take some rest; and David, surrounded by his band, lay concealed in that very den. He held Saul now wholly in his power, and his followers urged him to believe that this chance was providentially sent to rid him of his foe, and to ensure his safety for ever. But David shrank from the suggestion, and softly approaching Saul, he cut off the skirt of his robe. But he instantly repented even of this act, which might be construed into a want of the

respect which he owed to the anointed of the Lord. He waited quietly until Saul had left the cave; then following him and remaining at some distance, he bowed his face to the ground, and made himself known. It was a touching scene between the unhappy king and the object of his jealous hatred — David gentle and humble, Saul sorrow-laden and contrite, and now aware how far above him stood the son of Jesse. "Thou art more righteous than I," he said, "for thou hast requited me good, whereas I have requited thee evil." They parted in friendship, Saul returning to his residence in Gibeah, and David to his followers in the dreary clefts.

About this time Samuel died at Ramah, his birthplace, where he had long lived in retirement, in the midst of those prophets whom he trained, and through whom he exercised so powerful an influence over the future of his people. Yet though apparently passing his closing years in isolation, not showing himself in public, nor openly pronouncing either in favour of Saul or of David, he had still remained the guiding spirit of his time. He was deeply and sincerely lamented throughout the land. His remains were interred at Ramah, where the people assembled from near and far to pay the last honours to their great leader.

85. DAVID AND NABAL.

[1 Sam. XXV.]

David had meanwhile repaired to the wilderness of Paran, at the extreme south-eastern frontier of Palestine; but he soon returned to the desert of Maon. Here occurred an incident, which strikingly illustrates the life of the outlawed fugitive. There lived in Carmel, not far from the

district in which he was then staying, a very wealthy man of the name of Nabal, whose 3000 sheep and 1000 goats, as they grazed upon the surrounding pastures, had been protected against all attacks by David and his men. Nabal was a churlish and evil-disposed miser, foolish and hard-hearted; while his wife Abigail was as beautiful as she was charitable and intelligent. It was the time of the sheep-shearing, a season of great feasting and merry making in the household of Nabal. So David sent ten of his followers to Carmel, to ask for some present of provisions, in return for the services he had invariably given to Nabal's shepherds. But the harsh and graceless Nabal rudely and insultingly refused the request. "Who is David," he exclaimed, "who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants now-a-days that break away every one from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men, whom I know not whence they come?" — When David received the report of this taunting and ungrateful speech, his passion and anger were roused to an unusual height. For had he not shielded Nabal's flocks from the raids of marauders, and had he not been to his men a wall by night and by day? "So may the Lord," he exclaimed, "do to my enemies now and furthermore, if I leave of all that belongs to him, by the morning light, even a dog." He commanded four hundred of his followers at once to take arms, and to prepare for marching out. But one of Nabal's servants, probably knowing as an eye-witness the daring and the prompt vengeance of this little band, warned his mistress Abigail of the danger which threatened the whole household through her husband's hardness and folly. Meanwhile David set out for the habitation of Nabal. As he was approaching the covert of the hill overhanging Carmel, he met a train of laden asses winding slowly towards him. They carried large quantities of bread and meat

and wine, dried corn, clusters of raisins, and cakes of figs. Last of all came Abigail, the beautiful wife of Nabal. As soon as she perceived David, she alighted, and bowed herself humbly before him. So adroit were her words, so full of keen judgment and good sense, so ready and free was her generosity, so meek her petition, that she completely disarmed David's rage, and turned it to repentance of his sanguinary purpose. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," he said, when she had finished, "who sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy wisdom, and blessed be thou, who hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand." He accepted her presents and dismissed her thankfully. On the following morning, after a night spent by Nabal in feasting and drunkenness, Abigail told him of her meeting with David, and how she had barely averted the extermination of his entire household. Struck with fear and awe, Nabal never recovered from his consternation: ten days later he died. Not long afterwards, David asked Abigail to become his wife; she consented, and joined him in his mountain retreat. He married also Ahinoam, a maiden of Jezreel. But his first wife Michal, the daughter of Saul, was given by her father to Phalti, the son of Laish.

86. CONTINUED PERSECUTION OF DAVID.

[1 Sam. XXVI.]

Once more did Saul come forth from Gibeah, at the head of three thousand chosen warriors, to pursue the exiled David. Men of Ziph had disclosed to the king that David was concealed among the hills of Hachilah, in the east of the wilderness, and Saul followed closely upon his track. It was night, and the king's host had encamped in the valley below. Hachilah, when David who had carefully watched

their movements, issued from his hiding-place. Saul lay asleep in the trench, his spear fixed in the ground before him, and a cruse of water by his side. His soldiers, headed by Abner, were pitched around him. All had fallen asleep, and complete calmness prevailed. Once again the life of his great adversary was in David's hand. Followed by the brave and intrepid Abishai, the brother of Joab, he descended the hill-side, and stood within the enemy's camp. Abishai was prompting him to revenge. "Let me smite him with the spear," he exclaimed, "even to the earth at once, I will not smite him the second time." But again David's feeling of reverence proved Saul's protection. "Destroy him not," he replied, "for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?" But he softly seized the spear and the cruse of water, and carried them away. He ascended the opposite hill, and from thence called out loudly to Abner. His voice came ringing down into the valley to the camp of Saul. He spoke stinging words of reproach to the captain of the host, who was keeping so negligent and faithless a watch by the side of his king. "As the Lord lives," he concluded, "you are worthy to die, because you have not guarded your master, the Lord's anointed; and now see, where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was near his head!" Saul who had long been awake and listened, recognised the voice of David. Weighing the words he had heard, his contrition was aroused, and his bitter jealousy died away for the moment. He received back his spear, and departed from David with these words: "Blessed be thou, my son David, thou shalt undertake great things, and shalt also prevail." The two men met no more.

87. DAVID IN ZIKLAG.

[1 Sam. XXVII.]

Tired of constant wandering and flight, David determined to leave the territory of Judah where he was always at Saul's mercy, and to proceed into the land of the Philistines, where his enemy was not likely to pursue him. So he went westward with his 600 tried and chosen followers, and presented himself before Achisch king of Gath. This prince, considering their common enmity against Saul as a strong bond of union, received him kindly. He not only allowed David to live in Gath, but gave him and his adherents the town of Ziklag for a possession. The restless and warlike spirit of David would not permit him to live there idly and peacefully. He carried on an active warfare against the Amalekites, exterminating whole tribes, and plundering their property. Achish heard confused rumours of these expeditions; but David, shrewd and prudent, led him to believe that his arms were turned against his own country-men in the south of Judah, and that he was thus fighting for Achish no less than for himself. In this manner, the friendship with the Philistine chief was more and more strenghtened. So complete was the trust of the latter in David, that when the whole Philistine nation resolved upon attacking once more the provinces of Israel, Achish claimed the help of David, and appointed him the chief of his body guard. The Philistine army marched out at once, and pitched the camp at Shunem, in the very heart of the hostile country, in the district of Issachar, between the mountains of Tabor and Gilboa.

88. THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

[1 Sam. XXVIII.]

When the tidings of the Philistine invasion reached the unhappy and terror-stricken Saul, he quickly led forth his hosts, and encamped at Gilboa. His tortured mind turned anxiously to the Lord for help and counsel; but neither by dream, nor by vision, nor by prophets, did he obtain the wished for advice. Goaded to despair, he bethought himself at last of the witches, who were believed to be able to raise the dead, and to cause them to communicate with the living. As such belief is wholly in opposition to the doctrines of monotheism, being a preposterous and dangerous remnant of pagan idolatry, Saul himself had banished all sorcerers from the land during the earlier and better years of his reign, and had punished with death every transgression of his edict against witchcraft. Yet the old abuse still lingered in some districts, and among the witches left, one still lived at Endor, a little town north of Gilboa, in Issachar. To this woman Saul determined to resort for help. Disguising himself, he went to her house at nightfall with two companions. "I pray thee," he said to her, "divine for me by the familiar spirit, and bring up to me whom I shall name to thee." But the woman was afraid, and said, "Behold, thou knowest what Saul has done, that he has expelled from the land those that have familiar spirits and the wizards: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?" Saul, however, swore that nothing should happen to her, and bade her call up the spirit of Samuel. The woman obeyed, and proceeded to practise her strange art. We are told, she really saw Samuel, and when she beheld him, she cried out to Saul with a loud voice, "Why hast thou deceived me, for thou art Saul!" The king again re-assured her, and requested her to tell him what she had seen. "I saw," she

replied, "a god ascending out of the earth . . . an old man covered with a mantle." The Bible continues: "And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sorely distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me, and answers me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams; therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known to me what I shall do. Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord has departed from thee, and is become thy enemy? And the Lord has done to him, as He spoke by me: for the Lord has rent the kingdom out of thy hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David... Moreover, the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines, and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the Lord will indeed deliver the host of Israel into the hands of the Philistines." When Saul heard these words, he fell prostrate to the ground, fainting; for he had tasted no food all the preceding day and night. For a long time he refused to rise and to refresh himself; at last the entreaties of his companions and the woman prevailed upon him to sit down to the meal she had prepared.

The singular scene just related is in perfect keeping with the highly wrought and deluded mind of Saul, though it is not easy satisfactorily to explain, in what sense the false artifices of a so-called witch can be represented as revelations of God's holy will.

89. DAVID AGAIN IN ZIKLAG.

[1 Sam. XXIX. XXX.]

It was the day before the battle. The Philistine host had assembled at Aphek, near their former encampment at Shunem, while the Hebrews pitched their camp opposite them near a well before Jezreel. All the federal chiefs of the Philistines had united their forces into one vast and overwhelming army. David and his 600 followers were in the rear of Achish. When the Philistine leaders saw them, they expressed a strong objection to their presence. They could not reconcile themselves to the thought that David, their most dangerous enemy, who had humbled them repeatedly, should fight on their side. They could not believe him to be in earnest. Would he betray his native or his adopted country? For one he must betray, if he fought. They pressed upon Achish to dismiss him and his unreliable band. But Achish had complete confidence in David; but he could not oppose his will to the unanimous demand of the other chiefs. "I know," he said to David, "that thou art good in my sight as an angel of God; yet the princes of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not go up with us to the battle'." So David was induced to return to Ziklag with his followers: he was probably glad to do so; he no doubt marched back with a lighter heart than he had gone out; for he was delivered from a harassing moral conflict. But mournful and desolate was the sight which met him upon his return. The Amalekites, taking advantage of the defenceless state of the country, had, among other deeds of violence, sacked and burnt Ziklag, led away its flocks and herds, its women and children, and, seized immense property. David's own two wives were among the captives. A loud wail of horror and despair

burst from the bereaved Israelites. So deep and bitter was their grief, that in their anger they threatened the life of David, to whom they imputed their misfortunes, since he had left the town unprotected. But David, calm in this trying moment, soothed the rage of his men, and at once announced his intention of pursuing and attacking the audacious invaders. Fortified by a Divine oracle obtained through the priest Abiathar, he led his infuriate soldiers in breathless haste southward; only 400 of them could endure this exhausting march; the rest remained behind wearied and fainting before they crossed the brook Bezor. On his progress, David found in the fields an Egyptian apparently dead. He carefully tended and refreshed him, and thus saved his life. Requested to say who he was, this man related that he had been left behind, on account of illness, by his Amalekite master, when the army returned from burning Ziklag, and had lain there in the field for three days and three nights without food. David asked whether he would lead him and his soldiers to the camp of the men who had treated him so mercilessly. The Egyptian was ready to do so, on receiving the solemn pledge, that he would not be delivered up to his former master. — David and his band hurried on in hot pursuit, and soon saw their enemies before them. The Amalekites were feasting and revelling in the camp, surrounded by their recently acquired spoil. The Hebrews came suddenly upon them, and a terrible slaughter ensued. Four hundred young men alone of all the vast host of the heathen escaped upon their swift camels. All the captive women and children of the Israelites were rescued, not one of them was missing; all their property was recovered and in addition to it immense booty was taken from the invaders. The conquerors returned joyful and happy to their brethren at Bezor, with whom, in accordance with David's commands, they divided the spoil. From that time it became

the custom among the Israelites, that the men who remained behind for the protection of the camp, and those who fought in battle, should receive an equal share of the booty. — David, apprehending that Saul's career was drawing to its close, and desirous to gain the favour of the most influential of his countrymen, sent from the spoil rich presents with respectful greetings to the elders of all the principal towns of Judah.

90. DEATH OF SAUL AND JONATHAN.

[1 Sam. XXXI; 1 Chron. X.]

Meanwhile the Philistines had advanced towards Jezreel to attack the Hebrews. The battle raged with unprecedented fury. On both sides the men fought desperately. The struggle extended along the whole range of Mount Gilboa. But the Hebrews were utterly routed, and the king's own sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchishuah, were among the slain. Many fled for their lives. Saul also attempted to escape, but in his flight he was severely wounded by Philistine archers. Then giving up all hope, and dreading the thought of falling into the hands of his heathen enemies, he called upon his armour-bearer to slay him. But the man was afraid and durst not obey. Saul therefore fell upon his sword to kill himself. However, the wound not proving directly mortal, he earnestly entreated an Amalekite who had by chance come near the place, to pierce him with the sword, and the stranger, seeing that the king could not possibly recover, did as he was requested. The armour-bearer, now unwilling to live, died also by his own hand. The Philistines then occupied without a struggle many of the Hebrew towns deserted by their inhabitants who had fled in despair. On the next day, the Philistines came to the battle field to

strip the slain. When they recognised the bodies of the king and of his three sons, they set up a wild shout of rejoicing, cut off Saul's head, and took his arms, which they sent to their own country to be deposited in a chief temple of Ashtarte; but the bodies of Saul and of his sons they fixed on the wall of Beth-shan, a town not far from the Jordan opposite to the territory of Gilead. Valiant men of Jabesh in Gilead heard of the disgrace which their king had suffered. Faithful in their gratitude to him who had once so bravely saved them from ignominy and destruction, they walked all night, stole gently to the walls of Beth-shan, and recovered the bodies of Saul and his sons. They brought them to Jabesh, burnt them, and buried the ashes under a tamarisk tree. The whole town kept a fast for seven days.

David was in Ziklag, his Philistine home, awaiting probably with deep anxiety the tidings of the war, when there came running to the city a messenger with his blood-stained clothes rent and with earth upon his head. It was the Amalekite who had come from the scene of battle. He bore in his hand the royal crown and bracelet, which he laid before David with all signs of homage. He then related of the defeat of the Israelites and the death of Saul and his sons. He mentioned also that he had slain the wounded monarch at his own desire. — Grief and mourning prevailed among the Hebrews at Ziklag. All tore their garments and abstained from food that day. Then David summoned the Amalekite before him, and said, "How wast thou not afraid to stretch out thy hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" Calling one of his followers, he ordered him to slay the stranger, exclaiming, "Thy blood be upon thy head, for thy mouth has testified against thee, saying, 'I have slain the Lord's anointed'." But David gave another and a better proof of the sincerity of his grief and of his deep affection for Saul and

Jonathan, in a lament he composed over the fallen princes. It was called "the Song of the Bow", was taught to all Hebrews, and treasured as a sacred heirloom. It is a worthy monument of the heroic friendship that united David and Jonathan, and shows the second king of Israel in all the purity and power of his better nature. It runs thus:

"The pride of Israel is slain upon thy heights: how are the heroes fallen! Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the heathen triumph! Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew and no rain upon you, nor fields for firstfruit offerings; for there the shield of the heroes was tarnished, and the shield of Saul as though it had not been anointed with oil. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the heroes, the bow of Jonathan never shrank back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. — Saul and Jonathan, beloved and graceful in their lives, were not separated in their death: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. — Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and precious garments, who put on golden ornaments upon your apparel. — How are the heroes fallen in the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain upon thy heights! I am grieved for thee, my brother Jonathan; thou wast very dear to me; thy love was to me more precious than the love of women. — How are the heroes fallen! Now the weapons of war have perished!"

91. DAVID KING OF JUDAH.

[2 Sam. I—IV.]

Saul had reigned forty years. One son only, Ishbosheth, then 40 years of age, survived him. Jonathan left a son Mephibosheth, at that time five years old. When the sad tidings arrived from the battle-field of Gilboa, his nurse, in her alarm and consternation, tried to flee with the child; he fell and was lamed for life. Abner, the commander of Saul's army and his ever faithful follower, was determined that the sceptre should not depart from the house of Saul, and proclaimed Ishbosheth king over Israel. But considering him unsafe so near the land of Judah, he went with him to the old town Mahanaim, east of the Jordan, where the prince took up his temporary residence, while Abner himself soon returned to the province of Benjamin, and remained in Gibeon at the head of the army. David, watching these events with the most anxious attention, thought the time had come to leave the Philistine town Ziklag, where he had lived for one year and four months, and to proceed to the territory of Judah. He went to Hebron with all his men and their households. "Then came the people of Judah", so the Bible relates, "and anointed David king over the house of Judah." They felt confidence in their kinsman who had been tried by so many years of successful warfare, and had proved himself patient in all hardships, ingenious in overcoming dangers, a born ruler of men. They all gathered readily round him. In the prime and vigour of his life (he was then 30 years old), wise in council, prompt in action, godfearing and earnest, he seemed of all men the most fitted for a king in those troubled times. His very name had become a terror to his enemies, a word of sweet sound to his own people. He was now the warrior king, the poet, and at times the priest. He was surrounded by a band of

valiant heroes who had long shared his adventurous exploits. Chief of his followers, bravest of his captains, was Joab, his kinsman, son of his sister Zeruiah, a man of honest ambition, of inflexible will and daring purpose, who with difficulty curbed that stubborn spirit before his master David. He had two brothers Abishai and Asahel. The former was renowned for his fierce courage, and had slain 300 Philistines with his own hand; the latter was "as swift of foot as the wild gazelle." Many other heroes are mentioned by name; they accomplished wonderful feats of daring; they fought against lions and giants, stormed rocky fortresses, and stood their ground against overwhelming numbers of enemies. One of these adventures affords a touching proof of the strong attachment with which David had inspired his adherents. At a time of protracted warfare with the Philistines, he was hidden with his men near Adullam, while his antagonists were encamped at Bethlehem. Tormented with thirst, and wearied by the scorching rays of the sun, he longed for some water from his own pure well at Bethlehem. Eager to do his bidding at the peril of their lives, three of his most courageous men fought their way through the Philistine host, and returned with the longed for draught. David, though praising their heroism and devotion, would not taste the water they had obtained by risking their own life-blood, and he poured it out as an offering to God. It was with the aid of followers so resolute and so undaunted, that David might well hope to establish the new kingdom, and to become the protector of his people.

He initiated his rule by a graceful act. He sent his greeting to the men of Jabesh in Gilead, thanked them for the humanity they had shown in rescuing the bodies of Saul and his sons, and promised them his assistance whenever they should need it.

But the civil war now soon commenced in earnest. Abner commanding the party of Ishbosheth met Joab at the head of David's soldiers near a pond before Gibeon. At the suggestion of Abner, twelve young men of either side were to meet in friendly encounter to perform athletic sports before the army. But the mimic sport was turned into terrible reality. The men killed each other on the spot. This was the signal for a general fray, and a battle ensued, in which many of Abner's soldiers were slain. As this chief himself turned and fled, he was boldly pursued by the fleet-footed Asahel. It was a grand prize to which the ambitious youth aspired. Abner recognising his pursuer by the swiftness of his foot-steps, and conscious of his own unabated strength, was touched with pity, and begged Asahel to desist from his purpose and to avoid a hand-to-hand combat with him, but rather to turn aside and to disguise himself in the armour of one of his own followers. The youth heard this advice with disdain. Again, in the heat of the pursuit, Abner repeated his request, and again it was tauntingly rejected. At last Abner, to save his honour, felt obliged to turn in his flight, and he transfixed Asahel with his spear, who fell down dead. Enraged at the sad and untimely end of their brother, Joab and Abishai carried on the pursuit, while the Benjamites gathered upon a hill, and stood waiting to see what would be the result of this struggle. At last Abner, seeing the great danger of the moment, cried out to his pursuers, "Shall the sword devour for ever? Knowest thou not that bitterness will come in the end? How long will it be then, ere thou biddest thy people return from chasing after their brethren?" These words cooled down the fury of Joab; he commanded his men to leave off fighting; and both generals parted that day apparently reconciled. Yet the feeling of revenge was not extinguished in the heart of Joab. After burying his brother

in Bethlehem, he returned with his men to Hebron, while Abner and his soldiers passed safely over the Jordan, and joined their master in Mahanaim.

At short intervals, the combat between the two parties was resumed: "the war was long between the house of Saul and the house of David, but David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker." At last, even Abner could not help being convinced, that the whole land would ere long acknowledge David, who alone was able to lead and shield the people; and he felt that a continuance of civil warfare was a profitless and guilty shedding of blood. He was stimulated to quicker action by an insult he received from Ishbosheth, to whom he plainly declared, "So do God to Abner, and more also; just as the Lord has sworn to David, so will I do to him, to take away the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beer-sheba." The king knew well the unwavering energy of his general; he was afraid and too weak to oppose him. Abner took at once decisive measures. He spoke with the elders of Israel, and showed them the utter hopelessness of the struggle. He proved to them that Ishbosheth's success was not even desirable. He then sent messengers to David at Hebron, and offered him an alliance. Before David would entertain any proposal, he demanded back his wife Michal, the daughter of Saul. And when she had been given up, with reluctance and grief, by Phaltiel, to whom Saul had married her, Abner proceeded to Hebron fearlessly, accompanied by no more than twenty men. He was kindly received by David, and a royal feast was prepared for him and his followers. He finally left Hebron in peace with this parting promise: "I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thy heart desires."

At the time of Abner's visit in Hebron, Joab was absent on a military expedition. When he returned victorious and laden with spoil, and heard what had meanwhile happened, he upbraided the king for having given his old enemy a friendly reception, and allowed him to leave Hebron unhurt: "Thou knowest Abner, the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest." Without David's knowledge, he secretly sent messengers to entice Abner back into the town. He awaited his return in the gate, and there in a secluded corner he pierced his body with the sword, to avenge the death of his brother Asahel. David heard of this barbarous act of treachery with horror. Declaring himself guiltless of Abner's blood, he uttered a fearful curse upon Joab and his house, and he commanded a general fast and day of mourning. He himself followed the bier of Abner as it was carried to its last resting place. An immense concourse of people accompanied him. When he arrived at the grave, he wept bitterly; at last he pronounced this lament: "Was Abner to die as a wicked man dies? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters. As a man falls before impious men, so didst thou fall!" And then addressing the people, he said: "Know you not, that there is a chief and a great man fallen this day in Israel? But I am still weak and just anointed as king, and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are mightier than I am; the Lord will reward the evil-doer according to his evil deed." Then all Israel was convinced that David had no hand in the murder of Abner.

Bereft of Abner's firm guidance, the feeble Ishbosheth had no hope of maintaining himself against David; and he was not long afterwards killed by two Benjamites of the town Beeroth, as he was resting upon his bed at noon. His sad and inglorious rule, if rule it could be called,

had lasted two years. The perpetrators of the deed brought their master's head in triumph to David who, revolted at the crime, ordered them to be punished in the same manner as the Amalekite who boasted of having given the death-blow to Saul. He interred the head of his slain rival in the vault of Abner.

92. DAVID KING OVER ALL ISRAEL.

[2 Sam. V sqq.; 1 Chron. XI sqq.]

David was now sole king over Israel: there was none left to dispute his power. The people of Benjamin and Judah alike recognised him. The elders of all tribes came to Hebron to express their loyalty, and declared that even in the time of Saul they had looked upon him as their real leader and chief. David accepted their homage, and agreed with them on the conditions of his sovereignty. He was now publicly anointed for his new dignity, and the event was celebrated by great and general rejoicing. He had lived and reigned in Hebron seven years and six months. During this time six sons were born to him, of whom three — Amnon, Absalom, and Adoniah — became distinguished by later events. But Hebron was hardly suitable as a capital; its position alone, almost in the extreme south of the country, unfitted it for that purpose. David looked out for a more appropriate residence, and he found it in Jebus enshrined on its citadel of rocks, overlooking Samaria to the north and Judah to the south, a fortress made almost impregnable by nature. This was to be the new capital of the kingdom. So David decided, though the town was still in the power of the heathen Jebusites, from whose hands it was first to be wrested. The inhabitants felt so secure in their fastness and were so proud of its position, that at the approach of David and his army, they contemptuously manned the walls with the blind and the lame. But

David had set his heart upon winning the citadel of Zion; he commanded the rocks to be scaled, and excited the ambitious emulation of his warriors by promising high military distinction to him who should first enter the stronghold. Joab performed this feat of valour; Jebus was taken; David made it his royal residence, and called it Jerusalem. The fortress grew into a large city, it was gradually extended, and its walls were strengthened. The fame of this new capital spread far and wide; it reached Hiram, the king of Tyre, who sent skilled workmen and the wood of his much-prized cedar trees for the building of a palace. At this time, more sons were born to David, and among them Nathan and Solomon.

Now Israel's old enemies, the Philistines, set out to attack them again. They proceeded up to the valley of Rephaim, south-west of Jerusalem, on the frontier between Judah and Benjamin; but David, encouraged by Divine oracles, marched out to meet their army, defeated it repeatedly, and pursued the fugitives westward till Gazer.

93. THE ARK BROUGHT TO JERUSALEM.

[2 Sam. VI; 1 Chron. XV.]

Nothing seemed now wanting to the glory and greatness of Jerusalem but the holy Ark, the symbol of the Divine holiness. It had for many years been left in Kirjath-Jearim. David determined to hallow his residence by its presence. So he marched out with 30,000 chosen men of Israel, and proceeded northward to Kirjath-Jearim. He took the Ark from the house of Abinadab, and placed it in a new cart led by Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab's sons. As the procession moved onward, there was a burst of music and song, David and his followers playing on harps and psalteries, and on timbrels, cornets, and cymbals. But as

they advanced, the oxen broke away from the cart, and Uzzah placed his hand on the Ark to protect it. For this disregard of the Law he was visited with instantaneous death. David and the people paused, afraid of the Lord's anger. Unwilling to proceed with the Ark after this fatal occurrence, the king caused it to be brought into the house of Obed-edom, the Gittite, who lived near at hand. There it was left for three months, during which time God's blessing descended upon Obed-edom and his whole family. Thereby encouraged, David resumed his former intention of bringing the Ark into his own city of Jerusalem, and he made great preparations for its appropriate reception. Leaving aside the highly coloured account of the First Book of Chronicles, we learn, from the simpler narrative of the elder historian, that, this time, the Ark was not entrusted to a rude cart or unsafe oxen, but that it was borne aloft upon the shoulders of chosen men. Singers and musicians with their numerous instruments followed in a long train, whilst before the Ark went David dressed as a priest in a linen ephod, singing and dancing, and indulging in every kind of enthusiastic rejoicing. At very frequent intervals, the procession stopped in order to offer solemn sacrifices to God. A shout of delight rang from the walls of Jerusalem as the holy Ark was borne into the city. It is not impossible that for that occasion the following beautiful Psalm, the twenty-fourth in our collection, may have been composed:

"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that has clean hands and a pure heart; who does not lift up his soul to vanity, nor swears deceitfully: he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and

righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of those that seek Him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, lift them up, O ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah."

The Ark was carried to the Tabernacle which was prepared for its reception, and which was now to become truly the Sanctuary of the nation. Then the feelings of David are supposed to have again thus shaped themselves into words (Psalm XV):

"Lord, who shall abide in Thy Tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; he that backbites not with his tongue, nor does evil to his fellow-man, nor raises up a reproach against his neighbour; in whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but who honours those that fear the Lord; he that swears to his own hurt, and changes not; he that puts not out his money to usury, nor takes bribe against the innocent: he that does these things, shall never be moved."

Holocausts and thank-offerings commemorated an event so important in the religious history of the Hebrews; and David pronounced a blessing over the people in the name of God. Great public festivities followed, enhanced by the liberal distribution of royal bounties. All were filled with joy and hope and gratitude. One heart alone seemed unmoved at this soul-stirring spectacle. Michal, seeing David from her window leaping and dancing before the Ark, despised him in her heart, and upbraided him on his return from the

solemnities. She was punished by God for her pride and mockery by remaining childless.

One last wish was now uppermost in David's heart: the city of Jerusalem yet wanted its crown, a Temple, where the Ark of God, no more enclosed in a movable tent and between perishable curtains, would rest worthily enshrined. He consulted the prophet Nathan, who bid him follow the inclination of his own mind, for he would succeed. But the Lord appeared to the prophet in a vision, and declared His will, that not David should build the Temple but his son and successor, whose peaceful reign would be unstained by bloodshed, and who, if obedient to the Divine precepts, would be singularly blessed. At the same time God repeated the most glorious promises of help and favour to David and his posterity for ever. The king poured out the gratitude of his heart in a fervent prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

94. DAVID'S VICTORIES.

[2 Sam. VIII—X.]

The king's energies were now entirely employed in crushing the neighbouring enemies, who were a perpetual danger to Israel. He boldly ventured upon wars of aggression. He was successful everywhere, and he enriched the land with the spoil he took from the heathen foe. He smote and subdued the ever restless Philistines, and destroyed the independence of their chief town Gath. He invaded Moab, slew the greater part of the soldiers, and imposed upon the people a heavy tribute. He marched against Hadadezer, king of Zoba in Syria, whose empire extended from the vicinity of Damascus eastward to the borders of the Euphrates. He vanquished his armies, subjected his people, and sent the best of his

horses to Jerusalem, while he disabled the rest. The king of Damascus, justly alarmed at these conquests, came to the aid of the king of Zoba, but he was equally unfortunate, and succumbed to the marvellous activity and valour of David; 22,000 of his men were slain; Hebrew garrisons occupied the chief towns of Syria; and the people were compelled to pay annually a heavy impost. The famous golden shields belonging to the warriors of Hadadezer, were brought to Jerusalem, and later deposited in the Temple. From several Syrian towns rich in mines David took immense quantities of copper. Toi, the king of the illustrious Syrian commonwealth Hamath, rejoiced at the defeat of his rival Hadadezer, sent messengers to Jerusalem bearing as presents vessels of gold and silver and copper, which David likewise dedicated to God. Lastly, he smote the Edomites in a decisive battle in the Salt-valley, to the south of the Dead Sea; he killed 18,000 of the enemy in the combat, the memory of which he perpetuated by a great monument; and Idumea became a dependency garrisoned with Hebrew troops.

This unparalleled succession of victories not only established David's power, but spread abroad the glory and the dread of his name. He was looked upon as one of the mightiest rulers of the East. "He reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice to all his people." He was now anxious to prove his good-will towards the fallen family of his predecessor Saul, and to discover if there was anyone left to whom he might show kindness for the sake of Jonathan: so he addressed himself to Ziba, who had formerly been a servant of Saul. From Ziba's lips he heard of the lame son of Jonathan, Mephibosheth, now grown a man, who lived with his young son Micha in Lo-debar, a little town in Gilead. With generous delight, he sent for Mephibosheth and his son, received them with gladness, gave

them the land that had belonged to Saul, and charged Ziba and his servants with the management of that large property. With royal hospitality, Mephibosheth was invited as a perpetual guest at the king's table, and was treated as one of David's own sons.

About this time died Nahash, the king of Ammon, who in the days of David's wanderings had befriended the aged Jesse and his house. Prompted by gratitude, David sent messengers to Hanun, the son of Nahash, to convey his sympathy and condolence. But the Ammonite statesmen, misconstruing David's friendly intentions, roused their master's suspicion, and persuaded him into the belief that those messengers had come as spies to explore the capital and the country. The ungenerous Hanun listened to these imputations, and insulted David's ambassadors in a manner held most disgraceful among Orientals, by shaving off half their beards and curtailing their garments. The men, ashamed thus to appear in Jerusalem, were bidden by the king to stay at Jericho until their beards should have grown again But Hanun, now justly afraid of David's vengeance, actively prepared for war. He gathered mercenaries far and wide in those districts of Syria which were still embittered against the Hebrews by recent humiliations. An enormous host was assembled. The Syrian hirelings were to attack the Israelites in the field, while the Ammonites were to await them before their towns. David entrusted the command of his army to his long-tried general Joab, who divided his forces into two parts, retaining one half for himself to meet the Syrians, and confiding the other to his brother Abishai to fight against the Ammonites. "Be firm", he said to him, "and let us be firm for our people, and for the cities of our God; and may the Lord do what seems good to Him." The brothers agreed to come to each other's rescue if the chances of the war should render it necessary. The Syrians were now

impetuously assailed by Joab; they were completely routed, and fled in dismay. The Ammonites, disheartened by this disaster, sought refuge in their towns. But the indomitable Hadadezer assembled a fresh and larger army recruited from the countries of the Euphrates, and prepared for battle at Helam, on the eastern side of the Jordan. Now David himself went out to oppose this formidable army. Victory was faithful to him; for in a fearful carnage that ensued, the enemy's chief general was captured and slain, and the survivors fled in wild confusion. The Syrians, seeing that their strength was utterly broken, submitted to David, and consented to pay tribute.

But Hanun, who had wickedly occasioned this bloody war, was not to remain unpunished. Joab vowed that his sword should not rest until the country of Ammon was completely subdued, and Rabbah, the great city, conquered. The hosts of Israel marched out upon this distant campaign, and with them went, as in olden time, the Ark of the Lord. Joab led the army, passed rapidly through the enemy's country, and commenced the difficult and wearisome siege of Rabbah. David meanwhile remained in Jerusalem.

95. DAVID'S SIN.

[2 Sam. XI, XII.]

Connected with this war and siege is a grievous crime committed by David. It marks the beginning of the decrease of his prosperity. His moral debasement was but preparatory to the dark and mournful decline of his reign. He indeed repented bitterly, but he could not change the sad course of his existence.

Uriah, a Hittite, and one of the bravest officers in the Hebrew army, had a beautiful wife called Bathsheba. David saw her and instantly conceived for her a great passion.

In order to make her his wife, he determined upon the death of Uriah. He summoned him from the camp at Rabbah to Jerusalem, and sent him back with a letter to Joab, in which he commanded the general to place him at the most dangerous post, to cut him off from assistance, and thus to expose him to certain death. Joab obeyed unquestioningly. Uriah was sent out at the head of a party of men, to storm the walls of the city. There he fell pierced by an Ammonite archer. Joab at once dispatched a messenger to David with these tidings. In due time, the widow of Uriah became David's wife.

But the sinful deed cried for revenge and expiation. Let us hear the account of the Bible, which is clothed in a parable: "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord. And the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and said to him, 'There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished, and it grew up together with him and with his children; it ate of his own bread and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was to him as a daughter. And there came a traveller to the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd to dress for the wayfaring man that was come to him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.' And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, 'As the Lord lives, the man that has done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.' And Nathan said to David, 'Thou art the man. Thus says the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul, and I gave thee thy master's house and thy master's

wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given to thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised Me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thy own house, and I will take thy wives before thy eyes, and give them to thy neighbour. . . . For thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.' And David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said to David, The Lord also has put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. However, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to thee shall surely die."

Now Bathsheba bore him indeed a child; but the child lay stricken with a fatal illness, and the king in his great grief gave himself up to mourning and supplication. Stretched upon the ground fasting and refusing comfort, he prayed fervently to the Lord, imploring His help. The prayer remained unheeded. On the seventh day, the child died, and the servants of David, alarmed for their master, sought to hide the sad news from him. But the king grew suspicious at their secret whisperings, and soon learned from them the fate of his child. Then he rose from the earth, washed and anointed himself, changed his garments, and went into the House of the Lord to worship Him. When he returned into His palace, he took the food which he had refused before. His servants gazed at him in astonishment. So

complete a resignation to the heavy hand of sorrow they could not comprehend. Wonderingly they asked, "What is it that thou hast done? Thou didst fast and weep for the child while it was alive, but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread." David answered, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." Did the unhappy king find consolation in the hope of immortality? Did he, in these few words, boldly distance his predecessors and his contemporaries? His answer seems indeed to imply the conviction of another life with a clearness unparalleled before in the sacred narrative. Certain it is that the words uttered by David have found a ready echo again and again in sorrow-stricken hearts.

David and Bathsheba were comforted by the birth of another son, whom they called Solomon, "the peaceful", but to whom Nathan the prophet, blessing him in the name of God, gave besides another name, Jedidiah, "the beloved of the Lord", a name rich with joyous promises.

For more than a year had the siege of Rabbah been continued, until at length some important positions were taken; the great stronghold of the Ammonites seemed near its fall. It would probably have succumbed to the perseverance and skill of Joab; but the general, loyal and modest, was anxious to secure for David the fame of its capture. He entreated him to hasten to the camp at this last moment, and to take the city, "lest", said the warrior, "I take it, and it be called after my name." So David marched forth from Jerusalem with a large army, and fought against Rabbah and stormed it. He took from the king's head the heavy golden crown set with precious stones, and placed it on his

own head. As usual, the conqueror spoiled the conquered city, and fearful was the revenge taken upon the Ammonites. David "brought forth the people and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick kiln; and thus did he to all the children of Ammon." These cruelties, though not uncommon in the barbarity of those times, have left a dark stain upon the memory of David and Joab.

96. AMNON — ABSALOM.

[2 Sam. XIII—XX.]

Over the house of David dense and gloomy clouds were gathering, and they burst with terrible and destructive violence. His wives dwelt with their families in the royal city, although they probably did not all live together in the royal palace. The firstborn of David's sons was Amnon, the son of Ahinoam of Jezreel. He was a youth of fierce passions and uncontrollable impulses, harsh and capricious. He conceived a vehement love for his half-sister Tamar, the daughter of David and of Maachah, who was descended from the royal house of Geshur in Gilead. She was remarkable for beauty; and her beauty proved her misfortune. She was insulted by the reckless Amnon. Her brother Absalom deemed it his duty to avenge the disgrace. He was no less distinguished by outward appearance than his sister. "In all Israel there was none so much praised as Absalom for his beauty; from the sole of his feet even to the crown of his head, there was no blemish on him." But his long and luxurious hair was his peculiar pride; each year it was weighed, and was found to weigh 200 shekels. Between Absalom and his half-brother Amnon a terrible feud was now kindled which could only be quenched in the life-blood of the offender.

Absalom had large flocks of sheep grazing in Baal-hazor near the frontiers of Ephraim: at the time of sheep-shearing he invited all his brothers to the rural feasts, and pressed them till they consented to come. Amnon went among the rest. When his heart was merry with wine, the servants of Absalom slew him on a preconcerted sign from their master. A general panic seized the guests. No one thought of retaliating the bloody deed upon Absalom. All sprang upon their mules and fled. The tidings of the murder, growing as they travelled, came to king David in this form, that all his sons had been slain. Heartrending was the despair of the unhappy father. But Jonadab, his kinsman and the friend of Amnon, who was acquainted with all the sad events, told him what had really happened; and as he spoke, there came, to verify his words, riding up the hill into the city of Jerusalem, all the king's sons, weeping as they came. Absalom meanwhile had fled to his mother's family in Geshur, where he dwelt for three years.

David mourned bitterly for Amnon; but in his heart he was yearning for his exiled son Absalom. Joab read his wishes, and skilfully devised a scheme for reconciling father and son. David yielded easily, and permitted Absalom to return to Jerusalem. But he ordered him to remain in his own house, and not to appear before him. Was he unwilling to see the face of him, who had bereft him of his son Amnon? Or did he mistrust the weakness of his heart for his sinning child? During two years Absalom dwelt in Jerusalem with his three sons and his beautiful daughter Tamar, banished from the king's presence. He hoped from day to day to be forgiven and recalled. At last, at the end of two years, anxiously longing to behold his father again, he begged of Joab to come and see him at his house. But faithful to his master, Joab refused. Twice the request was sent, and twice it was unheeded. Then Absalom set

fire to a barley-field of Joab, who now appeared, indignant at the outrage. Absalom, however, calmed him by saying that he had found no other means of having the desired interview, and he now implored him to bring about a perfect reconciliation with his father; for "why have I come from Geshur", he concluded, "it would have been better for me, if I were there still!" Joab reported all this to David, who called Absalom, embraced and kissed him, and received him back into his affection.

But Absalom was false and faithless. Tormented and misled by ambition, he designed schemes for dethroning his father, and wresting the kingdom from him. He secretly prepared a revolt. He won the favour of the people by his love of pomp and magnificence; he was constantly seen riding in a chariot drawn by horses, before which fifty men were running. His insinuating manners, singular beauty, and reckless daring completed the conquest of the fickle multitude. He successfully sowed among the people the seeds of distrust against David's impartial justice; and when he saw that all was ripe for the rebellion, he induced the king to allow him to go to Hebron for the fulfilment of a vow which he professed to have made while living in Geshur. He went southward with two hundred unsuspecting followers. In Hebron he sounded the trumpet-call. Alas! the readily ungrateful people forgot the great king who had been anointed at that very place, and who had gloriously reigned over them for forty years, and they came flocking to the standard of Absalom. Even Ahitophel the Gilonite, David's wise counsellor, declared for his young son, and gave to the revolt the weight of his name and experience.

When the aged king heard the sad tidings, his great spirit was crushed. He did not think of resistance, but at once prepared for flight. With his entire household,

with all his servants, and with his devoted followers, he departed from his own loved city Jerusalem. "Arise, let us flee," he exclaimed, "for we shall not else escape from Absalom; make speed to depart lest he overtake us suddenly and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword." He was not quite left without attached friends. Six hundred men of Gath had recently joined him under their chief Ittai. But he was unwilling to imperil the lives and fortunes of these faithful men. He requested Ittai to return home, or to cast his lot with Absalom; for, said he, "thou art a stranger, and wilt go back to thy native land; thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go forward and backward with us? For I go whither I may. Return thou, and take back thy brethren in mercy and truth." But Ittai refused: "As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be." — Then the procession, mourning and weeping, passed over the brook Kidron, and took the road that led to the wilderness. On the opposite side of the brook, they were met by Zadok and Abiathar, the two priests; with them came their sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan, and a host of Levites bearing the Ark of the Covenant. But David refused to let the sacred shrine accompany him in his uncertain wanderings. With a humility and resignation that are sublime indeed and give proof of a thoroughly purified soul, he said to Zadok, "Carry back the Ark of God into the city; if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me back again, and show me both Himself und His habitation. But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seems good to Him." So the priests returned to Jerusalem carrying the Ark with them. Then David commenced the ascent of Mount Olivet; he walked barefooted, with his mantle drawn

over his head; and in like manner all the people that went with him hid their weeping faces. — Now the bitter tidings came to David, "Ahitophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." In his sorrow and despondency, he prayed: "O Lord, turn the counsel of Ahitophel into foolishness!" — When he had completed the ascent of the mountain, he was overtaken by the faithful Hushai the Archite, who came with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head. To him David confided his wishes and plans. He bade him return to Jerusalem and by skill or stratagem defeat the schemes of Ahitophel. Hushai was to feign allegiance to Absalom, and at once to communicate whatever he might learn of his intentions to the priests Zadok and Abiathar; and these should convey to the king the information through Ahimaaz and Jonathan, their fleet-footed sons.

So Hushai returned on his way, and entered Jerusalem about the same time as Absalom. David, still travelling on, was now met by Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, who brought two saddled asses laden with bread and wine. "What meanest thou by these?" asked David. The cunning Ziba replied, that the provisions were all for the king's use. "And where is thy master's son?" asked David again. Ziba uttered this falsehood in reply: "Behold, he dwells at Jerusalem; for he said, To-day will the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father." David in a moment of passion and anger answered, "Behold, thine is all that belongs to Mephibosheth."

The king passed on, and arrived at Bahurim, on the borders of the land of Benjamin. As the procession wound along the hill-side with the deep valley between him and the opposite hill, there came forth from his house Shimei, a descendant of Saul. The ravine divided him from the king. He gave vent to his burning hatred of the unhappy monarch; in his mad rage he cast stones at him and his

followers, heaping curse upon curse. "Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: the Lord has returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the Lord has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son; and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man." The anger of Abishai was aroused. "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king," he exclaimed, "let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head!" But David answered meekly: "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, Curse David! Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" And he added with touching pathos: "Behold, my son who came forth of my bowels, seeks my life, how much more now may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone and let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look upon my affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." So they passed onward on their side of the hill, while on the other side walked Shimei, throwing stones as before, and casting dust, and uttering loud imprecations. Sad and tired, the king and his followers rested at last after their weary and mournful day.

Meanwhile Absalom and his friends had entered Jerusalem, and among them his counsellor Ahitophel. As Hushai saw him coming into the city, he exclaimed, "God save the king!" For a moment Absalom was revolted at Hushai's faithlessness and ingratitude to his old master, and addressing him sharply, he said, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" But Hushai professed the deepest devotion to his master's son, and Absalom said no more. — Then Ahitophel, appealed to for his counsel, proposed that an army of 12,000 men should instantly be sent under his leadership in pursuit of David; thus, he said, they would come upon him in all the

weariness of his flight, would strike terror into his little band, disperse or kill them, and secure the king. Hushai heard with dismay this advice which might have proved fatal to his royal master, but he defeated it by his own ready cunning. He bid Absalom remember that king David was still a powerful man, that his heart was as the heart of a lion, that he was surrounded by valiant followers, and that to attack him might be the destruction of Absalom's army. And he continued: "Therefore I counsel that the men of Israel be altogether gathered to thee from Dan to Beer-sheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thy own person; so shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falls on the ground; and of him and of all men that are with him there shall not be left so much as one." This counsel was approved of by the unsuspecting Absalom in preference to that of Ahitophel. But Hushai despatched forthwith the priests' sons to report to the fugitive monarch the plans that had been decided upon. In spite of their great caution they were seen in their flight by a lad who betrayed their departure to Absalom. When the youths saw they were followed, they fled to Bahurim, where, escaping into the court of a house, they hid themselves in a well. The mistress of the dwelling, anxious to protect them, spread over the mouth of the well a covering, on which she put ground corn. Absalom's servants now arriving, asked eagerly, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" The woman answered, "They are gone over the brook of water." So the men went on their fruitless search, and returned to Jerusalem to report their failure. Meanwhile the two messengers sped to king David, and brought him Hushai's message, who advised him to continue his journey without delay. As the first rays of the morning sun lit up the banks of the Jordan, the king and his sorrowing followers passed safely over the

river, and travelled on to Mahanaim. — Ahitophel, seeing that his counsel had been rejected, whether stung by mortification, or anticipating his new master's ruin, "saddled his ass, and arose, and went home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father." — So David was freed from his most dreaded foe.

Absalom now determined to commence the attack with his vast host. He chose Amasa, one of Joab's kinsmen, as general, and marched out of Jerusalem into the land of Gilead. When David had entered Mahanaim with his followers, he had been met and cordially received by Shobi, one of the Ammonite princes, by Barzillai, a Gileadite, and other old adherents. They brought honey and milk, cheese and other provisions for the weary wayfarers. Strengthened and refreshed, David assembled his host, and, the old warrior spirit reviving, prepared for the encounter. He divided the army into three parts, one was to be led by Joab, one by Abishai, and the third by Ittai, the trusty friend from Gath. He then declared his resolution to head the army himself. But the devoted people would not allow the king to risk his life; they entreated him to remain in the city, while they would go forth to fight for him. The name of the old king had preserved its wonderful charm; hundreds and thousands of daring warriors flocked to his aid, and passed out before him to the battle as he stood in the gate of the city. When all was ready, he gave to the three commanders this parting injunction: "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, with Absalom."

The two armies met in a forest of Ephraim. It was a great and terrible battle. The host of Absalom was routed by the warriors of David. Absalom himself fled in terror and dismay. As he was riding through the wood on his swift mule, he was caught by the long locks of his hair

under the spreading branches of a large terebinth. Unable to extricate himself, he remained suspended, for his mule had escaped. One of David's servants brought this intelligence to Joab, who, relentless as ever, upbraided him for not having slain Absalom on the spot. Regardless of the man's feeling remonstrance, Joab went out himself armed with his darts; and as he approached the tree, he pierced the heart of Absalom. But as the young prince yet lived, three of Joab's warriors approached, and killed him with their swords. His body was thrown into a large pit, and covered with piles of stones.

As king David was sitting within the gates of the city, anxiously longing for tidings of the battle, the watchman on the roof saw a man approach at full speed, and he turned and told the king. As he looked out again, he observed that the messenger was followed by another. The swiftfooted Ahimaaz was the first, and David took courage. "A good man", he said, "and he comes with good tidings." As Ahimaaz drew near the king, he fell before him on his face, and exclaimed, "All is well! Blessed be the Lord thy God, who has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king." But David, heedless of his own fate, asked eagerly, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz answered evasively, "When Joab sent the king's servant and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was." Then came speeding onwards the second messenger Cushi, and he bore the fatal news that Absalom was among the slain. "And the king was much moved and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept, and as he went, thus he said: O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee. O Absalom, my son, my son!" — No joy was expressed at the great victory. The people dared not exult, when their king was in agony. A wail of bitter sorrow was ringing

among the warriors in the camp. Joab saw all this with indignation, and was incensed against David. He could not sympathise with the king's great grief, and he reproached him bitterly, how the death of an ungrateful child could have more weight with him than the deliverance of so many devoted generals and brave soldiers. He urged the unhappy father to leave his solitude, and to show himself to his people, by whom he would else be deserted. David's heart might be pained, yet he yielded to his kinsman's hard but judicious advice, and appeared once more in the gates of the city, where all the people flocked around him.

At the news of Absalom's death, the revolt ceased in the land, and all the Israelites were ready to return to their rightful king. The men of Judah, however, David's own tribe, held aloof. To them David despatched his two faithful priests, and sent them this message: "You are my brethren, you are my bones and my flesh, wherefore are you then the last to bring back the king?" And he promised to Amasa the chief command of his host in the place of Joab, whom he could not forgive for the cruel part he had taken in Absalom's death. Judah's allegiance was at last secured; the elders went to David, entreating him to come back to Jerusalem, and many of them went out to Gilgal, to conduct him home from the east of the Jordan.

His return presents both a strange contrast and a striking parallel to his flight. Shimei the Benjamite came from his hill-side home at Bahurim, and with him came Ziba, the faithless servant of Mephibosheth, with his fifteen sons and his twenty followers, and a host of 1000 Benjamites. Shimei was afraid of the king's just wrath which he knew he had aroused by his reckless curses, and which he was now anxious to avert by cowardly submission. Abishai, zealous and implacable, implored the king to permit him to slay his shameless slanderer. But David

was determined to regain his city without acts of violence. So he proclaimed general forgiveness, and swore that Shimei should not die. As he moved onward, he was met by the poor and faithful Mephibosheth, who had been mourning most sincerely the exile of his master. He came with all the outward signs of grief; he had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, since David had fled from Jerusalem. He told the story of Ziba's treachery who had so grossly calumniated him, and had taken from him the ass upon which he would have followed his monarch. Then David, who was perhaps slow to believe so much deceit, said to him, "Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I say, thou and Ziba divide the land." And Mephibosheth answered, "Yea, let him take it all, since my lord the king is come again in peace to his own house."

The aged and generous Barzillai, a man of wealth and influence in Gilead, who had welcomed and assisted David at Mahanaim, now accompanied him over the Jordan. David, in grateful appreciation of his services, begged the old chief to go with him to Jerusalem, and to share his royal table. But Barzillai answered wisely, "How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am this day eighty years old, and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear anymore the voice of singing men or singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden to my lord the king?" So when they passed the Jordan, David blessed Barzillai, who returned on his way, while Chimham, one of his kinsmen, went with the king to Jerusalem. On the road, a quarrel arose between the men of Israel and the men of Judah. The former, who had been the first to pronounce for David's return, were angry that the men of Judah had presumed to claim the privilege of bringing back the exiled monarch. But the men of Judah

warmly contended that the king was their nearer kinsman; besides, they added, "have we eaten at all of the king's cost, or has he given us any gift?" — This dispute, insignificant as it might appear, grew step by step into a violent feud, and led not long afterwards to the most important consequences.

Sheba, a Benjamite, a man of a turbulent and ambitious nature, was the first to take advantage of the estrangement, and stirred up a revolt. He sounded the trumpet-call and exclaimed, "We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, o Israel!" So the fickle Israelites followed Sheba, while the men of Judah clung to David. To Amasa, Joab's successor in the chief command, the king gave his instructions for the coming campaign. But Amasa did not assemble the army within the appointed time; and David, suspecting treachery and impatient of delay, sent for Abishai, and bid him at once commence the pursuit, to prevent Sheba from escaping into one of the walled cities. Abishai and Joab set forth immediately at the head of their host. When they arrived at a certain large stone near Gideon, they came in sight of Amasa. Joab had girded his cloak tightly round him so as to leave him free for the hasty march, and a sheathed sword hung at his side. As he ran to meet Amasa, he allowed the sword to drop from its sheath. He advanced treacherously to welcome his rival, and taking him by his beard as if to kiss him, he asked, "Art thou in health, my brother?" At the same moment he buried his sword in Amasa's side, so that it passed through his body, and he fell upon the ground and died. After this foul deed, Joab and Abishai proceeded swiftly on their pursuit, leaving the corpse of Amasa lying across the high-way, wallowing in blood. As the warriors passed by at intervals, and saw their murdered chieftain, they halted in dismay, until at last one of Joab's followers

carried the body into a field, and covered it with a cloth Then all the soldiers pursued their way without hindrance. At last Joab discovered that Sheba had taken refuge in a northern town in the east of the Jordan, at Abel of Beth-Maachah, situated at the foot of mount Hermon. He surrounded the town, threw up a bank, commenced making the trenches, and prepared to batter down the walls. But a wise woman saved the town. She appeared at the gates, and called to Joab. She entreated him to spare the innocent city and its inhabitants, and not "to swallow up the inheritance of the Lord", but to be satisfied with the death of the traitor Sheba, whom she promised to deliver into his hand. Then she went to the people, and persuaded them to follow her counsel. The head of Sheba was cast over the walls to Joab. Thus the war was ended, and the soldiers dispersed to their homes.

97. FAMINE AND EXPIATION.

[2 Sam. XXI.]

But the days of trial and darkness were not over for David. A fearful famine, recurring for three successive years, prostrated the kingdom. But it brought with it a much more terrible misfortune than destitution and starvation. David's troubled mind attributed the scourge to some iniquitous deed that had remained unatoned. His oracles told him that it was sent as a punishment for the slaughter of the Gibeonites by Saul, which had been a violation of the assurances of peace given to them by Joshua. He asked of the Gibeonites what atonement they desired. They replied, "Let seven men of Saul's sons be delivered to us, and we will hang them up to the Lord." Alas! David had not the strength of mind or the courage to refuse this barbarous request. He laid himself open to the suspicion of eagerly seizing

an opportunity for ridding himself of the dangerous members of a rival dynasty. For, sparing the feeble and crippled Mephibosheth, he chose seven of Saul's most prominent kinsmen, the two sons of Rizpah, Saul's daughter, and the five sons whom Michal had born to Adriel, the son of Barzillai. All these he delivered into the hands of the Gibeonites; "and they hanged them in the hill before the Lord". An act of tender love relieves the account of these deeds of horror and superstition. Rizpah, the bereaved mother, came to the spot where her children and relatives had been murdered, and where they were left to hang from their gibbets; spreading sackcloth upon the ground, she remained there from the beginning of the harvest until the rains commenced; and all this time she anxiously warded off the birds by day and the beasts by night from preying on the bodies of the slain. — At last the story of this devoted woman came to the ears of the king; he was touched with pity, may be with remorse; for he ordered the bones to be gathered up, and to be buried in the sepulchre of Kish, the ancestor of the victims. To them were added the bones of Saul and Jonathan, which had been in Jabesh in Gilead from the time of the Philistine victory on mount Gilboa. — Then David prayed again to the Lord for mercy, and the famine ceased.

98. DAVID'S LAST DEEDS AND DEATH.

[2 Sam. XXI—XXIV; 1 Kings I. II; 1 Chron. XXI sqq.]

But war recommenced with the Philistines, the old enemies of the Hebrews. David himself went out to battle, but the arm of the great hero had become feeble. Engaged in single combat with a mighty giant, Ishbi of Nob, he nearly succumbed, when he was saved by Abishai, who hastened to his rescue and smote the Philistine. Then all

his followers thronged to him, and implored him not to go forth again to battle; for if he fell, the light of Israel would be extinguished. Several other encounters against the Philistines were brought to a successful termination by his heroes and generals.

Then the voice of the aged David was heard in a noble Psalm of thanksgiving, in which the varied fortunes of his life and his experience, his thoughts and emotions, and his eminent poetical power were faithfully mirrored. In spite of constant trouble and bitter sorrow, in spite of household feuds, of famine and of war, the king exclaimed with fervour: "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer. The God of my rock, in Him will I trust, He is my shield, and the horn of my salvation. . . . He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters; He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me; for they were too strong for me. They surrounded me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support. He brought me forth into safety; He delivered me, because He delighted in me. The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands has He recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. . . For Thou art my lamp, O Lord, and the Lord will lighten my darkness. For by Thee I have run through troops; by my God have I leaped over walls. As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is tried: He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him. For who is God save the Lord? and who is a rock save our God? God is my strength and power; and He makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like hinds' feet, and sets me upon my high places. He teaches my hands to war, so that my arm draws the bow of steel. And Thou hast given me the shield of Thy salvation, and Thy compassion has made me great. Thou hast enlarged

my steps under me, so that my feet did not slip. I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them, and turned not again until I had consumed them. . . . Thou hast also delivered me from the struggles of my people, Thou hast guarded me to be the chief of nations; many a people I knew not serve me. Strangers submit to me; hearing the report of my fame, they are obedient to me; strangers tremble in awe, and come forth in fear from their fastnesses. The Lord lives; and blessed be my Rock, and exalted be the God of the Rock of my salvation. It is God who avenged me, and who brought down the nations under me, and rescued me from my enemies; Thou also hast lifted me up high above my adversaries, Thou hast delivered me from the men of violence. Therefore, I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, among the nations, and I will sing praises to Thy name. He makes glorious the salvation for His king, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David and to his seed for evermore."

But there was yet trouble in store for the king, before death brought peace to him for ever. Probably desirous to prove his greatness to the world, he insisted upon numbering the people of his kingdom. This was deemed an act of vainglory and pride displeasing to God, and even the unscrupulous Joab advised him to abstain from it. But the king persisted in his resolution; the census was taken from Dan to Beersheba, when it was found that there were in the whole land 800,000 men able to bear arms, of whom no less than 500,000 belonged to the tribe of Judah. But no sooner had the command been carried out, when David felt that he had sinned, and he prayed to the Lord for pardon. Then came to him Gad the seer with the Divine words: "I offer thee three things, choose one of them, that I may do it to thee." These three things were seven years of famine in the land, or three months flight before the enemy, or three days pestilence among the

people. And David answered, "I am in great distress! Let us fall, I pray, into the hand of the Lord; for His mercies are great, and not into the hand of man." So the pestilence raged, causing fearful destruction, but sparing Jerusalem. It carried off 70,000 men. The angel of the Lord stayed in his fatal progress at the threshing-floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, and it was there, in accordance with the word of Gad, that David built an altar and offered up sacrifices.

The infirmities of old age now pressed more and more painfully upon David, and his uneasiness was increased by the sorrow and confusion in his own house. Haggith, the mother of Absalom, had another son called Adonijah who, like his brother, was renowned for beauty and aspiring ambition. He set his heart upon succeeding to the throne of his father, and therefore sought to obtain the help of the influential Joab and of Abiathar, one of the chief priests; but he was strenuously opposed by the old warriors and others who remained faithful to the aged king, and among whom Zadok the priest, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the prophet Nathan were the most distinguished. Irritated by this resistance, the impetuous youth resolved to hasten the execution of his plans. He prepared a great feast in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and invited to it all the king's sons and all the men of Judah, but purposely omitted all those whom he knew to be friendly to David, and of course his half-brother Solomon, who, as was well known, had been appointed by his father heir to the throne. Nathan, wise and faithful, saw the great dangers of the moment, and he thought it his duty to impress them on David's mind. He, therefore, requested Bathsheba, the king's favourite wife and the mother of Solomon, to go to her husband, to inform him of Adonijah's rebellious plans and proceedings, and to urge him to confirm the rights of her son. Bathsheba readily consented. She had

hardly finished the narrative of Adonijah's seditious schemes and of the feast which he was then holding with the guests he had invited and omitted, when the prophet Nathan himself entered to strengthen the impression produced by Bathsheba's words.

David had sworn that Solomon should be his successor, and he now repeated the promise to Bathsheba. Nay he was determined that from that very day Solomon should be considered as king of Israel. He summoned before him the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and the warrior Benaiah. To these three faithful subjects he intrusted his son Solomon; they were to mount him on his own mule, the sign of royalty, to lead him to Gihon, there to anoint him with the sacred oil, and to proclaim his consecration by the solemn blast of the trumpet. The commands of the king were carried out without delay.

Adoniah and his guests were suddenly roused at their feast by loud and incessant shouts of joy; it was as if the whole earth were rent by the tumultuous cries. But the sound of the trumpet startled the vigilant Joab. "Wherefore", he exclaimed, "is the voice of the city in an uproar?" While he yet spoke, there entered breathless Jonathan, the son of the priest Abiathar. Joab exclaimed anxiously and with the old eagerness that never forsook him, "Come in, for thou art a valiant man and bringest good tidings!" Then Jonathan related what had just occurred, how Solomon had been anointed king over all Israel, and how the people greeted him with acclamations of homage. Hearing these ominous words, Adonijah and his followers, giving up all hope of success, separated in silence. Adonijah sought refuge at the horns of the altar, for he apprehended the king's just revenge. But Solomon bid him not be afraid and promised that no hair of his head should

fall, if he thenceforward remained loyal and peaceful; he then sent him home unharmed.

The long and troubled reign of David approached its end. The king lay feeble and stricken, awaiting the angel of death, and beside him stood the young king Solomon listening to his last behests. "I go the way of all the earth," said he, "be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man." Then he urgently impressed upon his son, to walk in the ways of the Lord and to follow the Divine commandments with all his heart. But true to his age, his nature, and the custom of his country, he made Solomon the heir of his own feuds, and he bid him punish his enemies, to whom his death was to bring neither safety nor pardon. Joab had been unscrupulous and revengeful; he had insidiously murdered Abner and Amasa against all usages of war and all rights of peace; he was therefore to die a violent death; the youthful and vigorous son was to execute that punishment which the aged king, awed by Joab's fierce valour and commanding influence, had not dared to inflict. Again, Shimei who had so bitterly cursed David from the mountain side when on his sad flight before Absalom, was to suffer the deserved retribution. On the other hand, the sons of Barzillai, that good and faithful old chieftain of Gilead, were to be loved and respected, and to receive the debt of gratitude which their generous father had declined. And thus mingling with his last breath gentle gratitude and implacable revenge, David sank to his eternal rest — the undaunted warrior king, the master of undying song, the pride of his people, one of the great men of all times.

Good and evil were blended in David's character as they were blended in few others of whom history bears record. His whole life is the story of a violent moral struggle incessantly carried on. It presents the ever recurring transition from sin to repentance, from inward strife to inward peace.

His repentance was so prompt, his self-accusation so complete, his cry for Divine help so eager, that he invariably wins first our sympathy for his sufferings, and then our admiration for the heroic struggle by which he strives to subdue them. His was a strong and impulsive nature, ready to succumb to temptation, yet as ready to battle with it. He was singularly clear in his perception of moral excellence, and unusually earnest in his efforts for moral improvement; yet he too often fell a victim to the delusions of ambition and passion, and to the snares of revenge and hatred. He was humble and obedient to the warnings of the prophets, and moved to submissive confession by a word of reproach. At such times he would cast aside his royal robes, sit in sackcloth and ashes, weep over the wrong he had done or intended, and repent with all the sincerity of his nature.

Of his valour and his courage, of his adventurous exploits, of his skill in battle and his promptitude in attack, the foregoing narrative gives ample proofs. But to all this was added a peculiar charm of person and manner, in which we must seek the true secret of his resistless power over his people.

That influence was not a little strengthened by his poetical genius. As he governed the nation by his strength and daring, so he trained and ennobled it by his song. He gained glory in war and affection in peace. He was endeared to every heart by manifold ties. His name is attached to a collection of poems unrivalled in the literature of the world. It contains indeed the productions of many authors and of different ages, but includes also a considerable number which are undoubtedly the compositions of David. These are perhaps most remarkable for simple pathos, sweetness, and heartfelt piety. They are less lofty in language and less grand in imagery than many others preserved in the Book

of Psalms, but they are the most human of all, and therefore the most touching. Is it strange, that men, ever labouring, penitent, and hopeful, eager in worldly pursuits, yet longing for rest and peace, should find a faithful type of their life and struggles in the history of David, the ruler, the warrior, and the poet, and should cling to that name as to the name of a well-loved friend?

IX. THE HISTORY OF KING SOLOMON.

(1015—975.)

99. SOLOMON'S SEVERE JUSTICE.

[1 Kings II.]

Solomon's reign was the golden era of the Hebrew monarchy. Like the Augustan age of Rome, the time of Solomon seemed to combine the power and the splendour of foregoing and succeeding generations. Its brilliancy and magnificence rejoiced the hearts of all Israel, and dazzled the strangers of distant lands. Every trace of the people rescued from Egyptian slavery and settling in a conquered land after violent feuds, had at last vanished; and as yet no sign of future reverses or humiliations clouded the horizon. The Hebrew commonwealth was in the very noon-day of its happiness. Solomon "the peaceful one", or Jedidiah "the darling of the Lord", was to bring glory and power to the well-established empire.

Yet some stern duties had been bequeathed to him by his great father, and he did not shrink from executing them, however repugnant they might have been to his nature. Adonijah, the rebellious son of David, had not forgotten the failure of his schemes, nor had he apparently renounced his ambition. He addressed himself to Bathsheba, who had

doubtless become one of the most influential persons at the new court, and demanded her intercession for obtaining from Solomon the permission of making Abishag the Shunamite his wife. Bathsheba, evidently anxious to keep the peace between the two brothers, presented herself before Solomon, who received her with all the solemn dignity of a great eastern potentate, and bade her make her request. Abishag had been one of the inferior wives of king David, and as such belonged by law to his successor on the throne. Solomon understood the artful demand of Adonijah, and answered angrily, "And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunamite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also, for he is my elder brother, yea for him and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah."

Adonijah had sealed his own fate; he fell on that very day by the hand of Benaiah at the command of the king.—The priest Abiathar, who had joined the sedition of Adonijah, was deposed from his sacred office and exiled from Jerusalem. He was the last surviving descendant of the house of Eli. In his place the faithful Zadok was installed. It is difficult to speak of the last sad days of Joab without a thrill of pain and commiseration. The sturdy and valiant warrior is so completely associated in our minds with the early adventures of David's reign, and with the storming of the city of Jebus, that we can hardly bring ourselves to look upon him as a rebel to the king or in any way unloyal to his master. Yet, though he had not turned aside in the days of Absalom, he had followed Adonijah; besides which his hands were stained with the blood of Abner "that prince among men", and of Amasa, a kinsman of David. There is a certain grandeur in the last acts of Joab's despair; his resistance faithfully reflects his nature. He fled to the Tabernacle, within the precincts of which the fugitive deemed himself safe, and seized the horns of the altar for protection.

There he was found by Benaiah, who came with Solomon's fatal mandate. Benaiah shrank from defiling the Tabernacle, and bade Joab come forth. "Nay, but I will die here", resolutely exclaimed the aged warrior. As if awed by the greatness of the man, Benaiah hesitated, and brought the report of his interview to the king. But Solomon insisted upon executing what his dying father had enjoined upon him, and commanded Benaiah to return and to slay the guilty man. So Joab fell, still clinging to the altar, the mightiest and greatest of the sons of Zeruiah. He was buried in his own town in the wilderness of Judah.

Then Solomon sent for Shimei who had once so bitterly cursed David on his flight from the capital, and commanded him never to leave Jerusalem on penalty of death. Shimei promised obedience; but at the end of three years, when two of his servants had escaped to Gath, he hastened after them to bring them back. This was enough; Benaiah's sword was again uplifted, and the last victim was slain to avenge king David.

With this chapter of bloodshed and retribution, we seem for a time to close the old and familiar records of the Bible, and to commence a new and far different narrative, which centres in the account of the growth and splendour of the Hebrew monarchy. And yet this very perfection enclosed the seeds of decay; it could not be upheld without a complete unity of all the tribes; and that unity was not to be counted upon.

100. SOLOMON'S WISDOM AND POWER.

[1 Kings III.-IV; 2 Chr. I.]

Solomon was twenty years of age when he came to the throne. His earnest and thoughtful mind was evidently

much impressed by the duties that devolved upon him. There seemed to be in his bearing a natural dignity and stateliness, which never deserted him, and which imparted a solemn grandeur to every occurrence of his life. He was the very type of the wise oriental autocrat. Soon after his accession to the throne, he sought the friendship of Pharaoh, the powerful king of Egypt, and married his daughter, whom he brought to Jerusalem with the utmost pomp. But in spite of this union with an idolatress, Solomon remained faithful to the God of his ancestors, and was anxious to worship Him truly. However, he sacrificed and burnt incense on the high places, and especially at Gibeon, where the "great altar" was erected, and where he offered thousand holocausts at a time.

It was upon the occasion of one of these solemnities that Solomon, as he slept on the hill of Gibeon, had a remarkable dream or vision. He heard the Lord's voice saying, "Ask, what shall I give thee?" His answer was prompt; he prayed for wisdom: "Give Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this Thy great people?" The speech pleased the Lord, since Solomon had not asked for long life or for riches or for the death of his enemies, but for discernment; and He said: "I will do according to thy words; behold I give thee a wise and understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, nor shall after thee anyone arise like thee; and I shall also give thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour."

When Solomon awoke from his dream, he felt strengthened and hallowed, and as if to confirm his resolution by a sacred vow, he offered sacrifices at Jerusalem before the Ark, and prepared a feast for all those who surrounded him.

He found many occasions for exercising that wisdom and discernment for which he soon became famous; but no incident struck his contemporaries more forcibly than the following remarkable judgment. There appeared before him two women suing for justice. Their cause was a strange one. They lived together in the same house, and had each a child of exactly the same age. One night, one of these two children died. Now both women laid claim to the living infant, one of them declaring, that the mother of the dead child had secretly changed it in the night for her own living one while she was asleep, the other affirming as positively that the living child was hers. The people thronged in large numbers the place of judgment to hear the king's decision. Solomon, after attentively listening to both parties, called for a servant. "Divide," he said, "the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other." These words were scarcely uttered, when one of the women exclaimed in agony and horror, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it." But her companion said coldly, "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it." Then the king answered and said, "Give to the first woman the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is its mother."

Similar proofs of shrewd knowledge of life and human nature and of ready presence of mind, spread Solomon's fame far and wide, and he was declared to be "wiser than all others, even than all the children of the East, wiser than all the wise men of Egypt." We are told that he was the author of three thousand proverbs and of a thousand and five songs. Besides being a philosopher and a poet, he was well versed in the sciences of botany and of natural history: "he could tell of all trees from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that springs out of the wall, and he could tell of beasts, of fowl, of creeping things, and of fish." Nothing

was too large and nothing too trifling for his comprehensive mind and his all-embracing interest.

Under his rule, the empire was singularly powerful and prosperous. It comprised all the territories from the river of Egypt eastward and northward up to the Euphrates. It was disturbed neither by harassing warfare nor internal feud. It was acknowledged and respected by neighbouring kings and chieftains, who sought the great monarch's favour by presents and homage. Solomon himself prudently established friendly relations with other countries both near and distant. Egypt supplied him with horses, till then a very rare luxury in Palestine. From Arabia the caravans came laden with balms and spices for the royal palace. Ships sailed once in every three years westward to the seaport Tarshish or Tartessus in Spain, whose mines probably furnished him with stores of silver, or they ventured eastward to the coasts of Ophir or India, which yielded treasures of gold. Apes, peacocks, elephants' tusks, and other objects of curiosity or usefulness were brought home in abundance by enterprising mariners and merchants. Thus for the first time the wonders of remote countries broke upon the astonished and delighted eyes of the Israelites; and for the first time an intercourse was organised between the eastern world and the west, the birthplace of civilizing arts.

Solomon's own royal state in Jerusalem was of unequalled splendour. His vast household demanded for daily consumption thirty measures of fine flour and sixty measures of other meal; ten fat oxen, twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep, besides harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl. Twelve officers had the care over the supply of these provisions, each of them for one month in the year. They were great chieftains who deserved the name of princes. The royal stables numbered 40,000 horses and 12,000 horsemen, while a large number of men were ap-

pointed to supply the necessary food. The vast army was commanded by the vigilant Benaiah. Zadok and Abiathar were the chief priests of the Sanctuary. But this unsurpassed pomp of the court was not burdensome or impoverishing for the land; for, says the Bible, "Judah and Israel were numerous as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry. . . . And Judah and Israel dwelt safely every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon."

101. THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

[1 Kings V—VII; 2 Chron. II—V.]

Splendid as were the life and the habits of the young monarch, all his ideas of magnificence and grandeur were to be concentrated in the building of the Temple, the crowning act of his reign. The man of peace was permitted to erect a House for the Lord, a place for permanent and well-established worship. The site was chosen on the top of mount Moriah, there where Abraham had once proved his readiness to offer up his dearly beloved son in obedience to God's command, and where more recently the angel of the Lord had stayed the pestilence and appeared to David on the threshingfloor of Araunah.

In the four hundred and eightieth year after the exodus from the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of king Solomon's reign, the great work was begun. The king concluded a treaty of alliance with Hiram king of Tyre, who had entertained a sincere friendship for David, and who now extended it to his son. He rejoiced sincerely when he was informed of Solomon's project. He readily agreed to supply him with cedar trees felled on mount Lebanon, and to float them down along the seashore to Joppa, the port nearest to Jerusalem. He was, in return, annually to receive from Solo-

mon a considerable quantity of corn and oil. Tyrian and Hebrew workmen were jointly to be employed in large numbers, all of them to be paid by the Hebrew king. Cedars and cypresses were cut down in abundance. Stone and marble quarries freely yielded their treasures. Ships set sail eastward and westward, to bring back the choicest materials for the adornment of the House of God.

For seven years the work was unweariedly pursued. Energy went hand in hand with genius and skill. The Temple rose as if by magic. The sound of no hammer or any other iron tool was heard on the spot. The stones were cut to the required shape in their quarries, and then brought up to Moriah, there to be fitted together with nice precision. The Hebrew historian dwells with delight upon the description of this splendid undertaking which was so dear to the heart of every Israelite. He gives all the details with minute accuracy. Let it suffice to observe, that the Temple of Solomon was built after the model of the old Tabernacle, only of far more extensive proportions — it was sixty cubits long, twenty broad, and thirty high — and of more durable and more costly materials. The large outer Court, the first chamber or the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies, were all in a certain manner repetitions of the first design: for the Court contained the brazen altar of burnt-offerings and the huge brazen laver, and was a place of assemblage for the people; the Holy was adorned with the golden altar of burnt-incense, the candelabra, and the shew-bread table, and was reserved for the priests who officiated for the whole congregation; and the Holy of Holies enclosed the Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy-Seat and the mysterious Cherubim, and none was permitted to enter into it except the High-priest alone. All the parts of the house, the walls, the floor, and the ceiling, were first covered with beams and boards of cedar,

which were then overlaid with pure gold. The floor was spread over with the same precious metal. The walls all around, both from without and from within, were ornamented with carved figures of Cherubim and palm-trees and opening flowers. Round about the Temple ran a line of chambers for the use of the numerous priests, who lived or ministered within the sacred precincts. In the large outer Court the animal sacrifices were slaughtered and offered. Here the droves of sheep and the herds of oxen were led in and fastened to rings in massive stone walls. On each side of the Court were the kitchens where the sacrificial meat was prepared for the priests. Here were busily engaged the countless host of menials who took part in the duties of the Temple. The laver of brass, or "the molten sea", as it was called, which the priests used for their ablutions, rested upon twelve brazen bulls, and was capable of holding no less than two thousand measures of water. It was surrounded by ten smaller lavers of brass placed on wheels, which were richly ornamented by the skilful hand of Hiram, a Tyrian artist, the son of a Hebrew mother from the tribe of Naphthali. In front of the altar was a raised scaffold of brass, where king Solomon stood or sat when he attended the public sacrifices.

Behind the altar, the Court led into a beautiful porch, richly ornamented and decorated according to ingenious designs of Hiram. It was supported by a row of pillars, and was adorned with two gigantic columns of brass called Jachin and Boaz, which rested upon golden pedestals, and were by Hiram carved, wreathed, and adorned with the utmost skill and delicacy. The porch was the entrance to the Holy. Folding-doors of olive-wood and a partition made by golden chains separated the Holy from the Holy of Holies. As in the Tabernacle, this most sacred and most important part of the Sanctuary was in absolute darkness. All lavers,

shovels, and basins used in the service of the Court, were of bright brass, and they were made in such vast numbers that king Solomon left them unweighed; while the bowls, snuffers, basins, and spoons used in the Holy, were, like the altar, the table, and the candelabra, of pure gold.

102. DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE.

[1 Kings VIII; 2 Chron. VI. VII.]

The seventh month in the year, when the Feast of Tabernacles was solemnised, a season of rejoicing hallowed by religious observances, was the time selected for the dedication of the Temple. As usual, the inhabitants of Palestine came flocking in their long caravans to Jerusalem, the holy city, and for miles round about its walls the tents of the strangers were pitched. But on this occasion, the pilgrims were attracted by an event of singular solemnity and interest. We can well fancy their impatient anxiety to witness at last the completion of the Lord's House, their eagerness to behold its wonders, and their zeal to be present when the Ark was deposited in its new and permanent resting place. In that eventful year, the Feast of Tabernacles was to last fourteen days or twice the usual period.

Early on the morning of the great day, the elders of Israel, the heads of the tribes, the priests, and the Levites, assembled at the holy hill of Gibeon. From there they took the Tabernacle of the desert, the holy vessels and implements, with the Ark itself. Thus laden they set out on their way to the gates of Jerusalem. They were met during their progress by the king in his splendid robes, and by an immense congregation. Countless offerings preceded the Ark, and a sacrifice was presented at very frequent intervals. At last the procession arrived at the outer Court of the Temple. How the vast concourse of people must have

poured in to gaze in astonishment at the altar, and the lavers, and the great brass columns! The Ark contained the two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments, and nothing else. It was carried by the priests through the Court and the porch into the Holy, where they must have been startled by the blaze of gold which burst upon their eyes. From that inner chamber they passed into the dark and mysterious Holy of Holies. There, upon the unhewn rock, they placed the Ark, overshadowed by the golden wings of the Cherubim.

Meanwhile the great outer Court was thronged with eager worshippers. Round the huge altar were grouped the priests and Levites, and the musicians arrayed in their white garments, bearing in their hands cymbals and psalteries and harps. A hundred and twenty trumpeters were ready to sound their silver instruments. In front of the altar stood the king in all his youthful manliness and beauty; bearing the insignia of his rank. With one accord, the musicians broke forth into a magnificent strain of music, and for the first time the hymn of praise was heard in the Temple. At that solemn moment, in the presence of the king, the priests, and the people, the glory of the Lord filled the sacred edifice; and so brilliant was the spectacle that the priests could not minister on account of the dazzling light.

Then spoke the king: "The Lord said, that He would dwell in darkness; I have surely built Thee a House to dwell in, a settled place for Thee to abide in for ever."

He turned towards the people and blessed them. Then, kneeling in the presence of the congregation, he spread forth his hands and offered up a prayer remarkably beautiful and impressive. It is one of the finest forms of supplication that have been preserved to us; for it breathes a purity of religious feeling almost unknown before, and reveals, as nothing else does, the greatness of Solomon's mind, the

largeness of his religious views, and the depth of his moral sentiments.

After a short invocation, the king exclaimed: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this House that I have built! Yet have Thou respect to the prayer of Thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord, my God, to hearken to the cry and to the prayer, which Thy servant prays before Thee to-day: that Thy eyes may be open toward this House night and day, even toward the place of which Thou hast said, My name shall be there. . . . And hearken Thou to the supplication of Thy servant and of Thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place; and hear Thou in heaven, Thy dwelling-place; and when Thou hearest, forgive.

"If any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before Thy altar in this House: then hear Thou in heaven, and do, and judge Thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head, and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.

"When Thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against Thee, and shall turn again to Thee, and confess Thy name, and pray, and make supplication to Thee in this House: then hear Thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy people Israel, and bring them again to the land which Thou gavest to their fathers.

"When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against Thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess Thy name, and turn from their sin, when Thou afflictest them: then hear Thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy servants and of Thy people Israel, that Thou teach them the good wherein they should walk, and give

rain upon Thy land, which Thou hast given to Thy people for an inheritance.

"If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, or locusts, or if there be caterpillars; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man or by all Thy people Israel, who shall know every man the grief of his own heart and spread forth his hands toward this House: then hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart Thou knowest (for Thou, Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men), that they may fear Thee all the days they live in the land which Thou gavest to our fathers.

"Moreover, concerning a stranger, that is not of Thy people Israel, but comes out of a far country for Thy name's sake (for they shall hear of Thy great name, and of Thy strong hand, and of Thy stretched-out arm), when he shall come and pray toward this House: hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and do according to all for which the stranger calls to Thee; that all people of the earth may know Thy name, to fear Thee, as do Thy people Israel; and that they may know that this House, which I have built, is called by Thy name.

"If Thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever Thou shalt send them, and shall pray to the Lord toward the city which Thou hast chosen, and toward the House that I have built for Thy name: then hear Thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. If they sin against Thee (for there is no man that sins not), and Thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives to the land of the enemy far or near; yet if they shall be-

think themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication to Thee in the land of those who carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; and so return to Thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, who led them away captive, and pray to Thee toward their land, which Thou gavest to their fathers, the city which Thou hast chosen, and the House which I have built for Thy name: then hear Thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause; and forgive Thy people that have sinned against Thee, and all their transgressions, wherein they have transgressed against Thee, and give them compassion before those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them: for they are Thy people and Thy inheritance which Thou hast brought forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron; that Thy eyes may be open to the supplication of Thy servant, and to the supplication of Thy people Israel, to hearken to them in all that they call for to Thee. For Thou hast separated them from among all the people of the earth, to be Thy inheritance as Thou hast spoken through Moses Thy servant, when Thou didst bring our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God."

When the last words were uttered, Solomon rose from his knees, blessed the congregation a second time, and then commenced the sacrifices of dedication. Huge as was the altar, it was too small for the occasion. For it is related that 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep were killed on that day; therefore the middle of the Court was hallowed by the king for this special purpose. Suddenly a miraculous fire descended from heaven, and consumed the sacrifices. When the children of Israel beheld the glory of the Lord filling the Temple, and saw the heaven-sent flame upon the altar,

they prostrated themselves upon the ground and worshipped. Again the trumpets sounded, again music and song pealed forth, and the priests chanted: "Praise the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever!"

In the solemn silence of the night following the day of dedication, Solomon was again favoured by a vision of the Lord. "I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication that thou hast made before Me," said the voice of God; "I have hallowed this House which thou hast built, to put My name there for ever; and My eyes and My heart shall be there perpetually." Divine help and glory would belong to the chosen people and to the Temple as long as the ruler and the subjects walked in the fear of God; but if they forsook His commandments, ruin would fall upon them and upon that Temple at which they now gazed with so much pride and delight.

Thus the Temple was instituted as the only legitimate place of public devotion in the whole kingdom. No other was on any account permitted or tolerated. Purity of faith was to be secured through unity of worship controlled by watchful priests. And what was the form of that worship? Did it merely consist of endless sacrifices of oxen and sheep, the sprinkling of blood, and clouds of incense? Was the large and magnificent structure indeed nothing but a huge slaughter-house? Assuredly not. Sacrifices formed indeed the principal and most essential part of the ceremonial. They were the visible expression of reverence and awe, of joy and gratitude, of contrition and atonement. They were significant symbols helping to convey the worshipper's feelings and aspirations. But considering the large number of singers and musicians appointed for the service of the Temple, we may well suppose that music and song formed a prominent feature in the ritual of the Temple. The last Psalm alone is decisive: "Praise God in His Sanctuary, praise Him in the firmament of His power. . . . Praise Him with the sound of

the trumpet, praise Him with the psaltery and harp. . . . Praise Him with stringed instruments and organs." And when we recollect the so-called "Psalms of degrees" composed to be sung whilst the priests were ascending and descending the steps of the altar, we naturally conclude that music was the hand-maid of the highest order of religious poetry. We may, therefore, also infer that prayers, the more earnest and the more heartfelt because they were spontaneous and not yet fixed in unalterable formulas, were commonly offered up by priests and people, when the victims were presented or burnt upon the altar.

103. SOLOMON'S DECLINE, AND DEATH.

[1 Kings IX—XI; 2 Chron. VIII. IX.]

The magnificent Temple was not the only great work of king Solomon's reign. His own palace, the building of which lasted thirteen years, was in its kind equally grand and remarkable. It was of imposing dimensions. It rested on four lines of pillars of cedar wood which bore beams of the same material. The outer walls were hewn out of massive stones from the quarries, whilst the inner chambers were all of cedar wood. In front of the palace stood the famous "Porch of Judgment", the whole floor of which was covered with cedar-wood. Here was the king's great ivory throne ornamented with gold; six steps led up to it, and on each side were six golden lions crouching at the feet of the monarch. Behind this porch was the "house of the forest of Lebanon", 100 cubits long, 50 wide, and 30 high, and built on a similar plan as the palace. There hung glittering and blazing upon the walls two hundred golden targets and three hundred golden shields. Within the palace were banquetting chambers with massive drinking vessels of

pure gold; for in Solomon's reign "gold was not accounted of, and silver was considered in Jerusalem as stones." A splendidly arrayed retinue added to the luxury of the household, and the joyous strains of musicians and singers rang through the vast courts and chambers.

Solomon's queen, the Egyptian princess, had her separate palace, built probably in the same gorgeous style as his own. The city of Jerusalem was not only embellished and enlarged, but fortified by ramparts and a strong wall upon which rose towers and fortresses. Walled towns, storehouses, and granaries were built in all parts of the land from Jerusalem to the Lebanon.

In return for the large supplies of cedar- and cypress-trees received from Hiram, king of Tyre, Solomon gave him twenty cities in Galilee, upon which Hiram sent to the king 120 talents of gold. Those portions of the original inhabitants of Canaan who had not before been subdued, as the Amorites, Hittites, and Jebusites, were forced by Solomon to work as labourers and artisans, whilst he employed Israelites only to serve him as soldiers and officials of every kind and grade.

Thus the empire of Solomon became more and more famous for wealth and power, and the king's name was heralded abroad in distant countries for extraordinary wisdom and genius.

The Queen of Sheba, hearing in her Arabian home of the wonderful monarch, so gifted and so prosperous, journeyed to Jerusalem to test him with difficult riddles. She came followed by a long train of camels laden with spices and gold and precious stones. She appeared before Solomon, and put to him all the hard questions she had prepared. He readily answered them all. Then, she gazed with wondering eyes upon the magnificence of his palace and the splendour of his household, and exclaimed with fervour: "It was a

true report that I heard in my own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. But I did not believe the words until I came, and my eyes had seen it; and behold, the half was not told me; thy wisdom and thy wealth exceed the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants who stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom!" But generous in spirit like Solomon himself, she presented him "with 120 talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the Queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon." Her visit was followed by that of other rulers and chieftains, who, also attracted by the growing fame of Solomon's court, came to pay him homage and to offer him costly gifts.

It is sad to turn from the account of so much wisdom and power to traces of decline and dissolution which are unmistakeable in the last years of the monarch's reign. The sacred narrative, as if unwilling to dwell on the cheerless picture, ceases to be full and detailed, becomes broken and abrupt, passes over that period rapidly and almost hurriedly, and refers for further information to the "Acts of king Solomon", which work is unfortunately lost. A well-governed and flourishing commonwealth seems suddenly changed into a kingdom menaced both by foreign and internal foes, and tainted by the grossest idolatry. The stately and imposing figure of the king becomes pitiable on account of weakness and wavering indecision, and the peaceful and apparently unassailable security of the nation is disturbed by wild feuds and bitter warfare.

When Solomon had arrived at the height and fulness of earthly might and glory, "he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God." He took many wives, we are told a thousand, idolatrous maidens of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, of Canaan and Phoe-

nicia, and they infested Jerusalem with their own superstitions. The pure faith of the Hebrew king and his people was sullied. Instead of the one service in the Temple, offered to the one true God, Solomon bowed down before the most hideous idols. He tolerated the licentious worship of Astarte; he burnt incense to Chemosh, the god of the Moabites; and he sanctioned the detestable rites of Milcom and Molech, the deities of the Ammonites, in whose honour children were burnt. So entirely did Solomon forget the visions of the Lord, and the pledges he had given on the height of Gibeon and in Jerusalem, in his youthful zeal and fervour!

His mind became harassed by doubts and fears. His spirits, once so buoyant, were depressed and gloomy; the clear serenity of his judgment was clouded by the mists of morbid despondency. Life had become to him a burden, a strange riddle, an unintelligible mystery, and he exclaimed, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" Wherever he looked he found only "vexation of spirit": the porch of cedar, the ivory and gold-covered throne, the splendid retinue, the musicians and singers, all his wealth and magnificence were "empty vanity". Moreover, he began to be troubled in his kingdom. He was threatened and perpetually attacked by Hadad, the Edomite prince, who was eager to avenge the disastrous defeat of the Edomite army in the time of David. He was made uneasy by a serious rebellion of Jeroboam, one of his own officers, who evidently relied on influential support. At last, in the midst of apprehension, strife, and disorder, he died after a reign of forty years, unhappy and pitiful, having passed from the summit of earthly happiness to the depth of human misery.

Most of the readers of the Bible justly associate with the name of Solomon not only the idea of a king and ruler, but that of a writer and philosopher. He was educated under the supervision of Nathan, the earnest and zealous

prophet, the friend of king David; and to his influence may be ascribed that taste for learning and speculation which distinguished Solomon throughout life. His mind was singularly active and enquiring. He was deterred by no obstacles or difficulties in the pursuit of knowledge. Bent especially upon the exploration of nature and her works, he constantly sent out expeditions to distant countries, to obtain specimens of remarkable animals or curious productions. He seems to have excelled in botany and zoology. He studied with zeal the structure and use of every tree and plant, and he incessantly enriched his collection of animals by foreign species. But ever restless and searching, he boldly rose to the realms of philosophic thought. His subtle mind was eager to unravel those difficult and intricate problems of life, which have ever engaged the researches of mankind, and have ever baffled them. Of the many songs he is reported to have written none unfortunately have been preserved to us: some Psalms that have been attributed to him are of doubtful authorship. Moreover, an early tradition assigned to his pen the Book of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. Though that tradition cannot be supported by decisive proofs, the two Books seem in so many ways to agree with the spirit of the age, and to reflect so faithfully some phases of Solomon's experience and intellectual life, that we can easily understand how men came to ascribe to him that satyre upon human greatness, and that idyl of Eastern life and love. But his worldly wisdom and his keen insight into the affairs, the motives, and passions of men, are most fully laid down in his remarkable collection of "Proverbs", which are so comprehensive in scope and so general in application, that they have become familiar maxims in every country where the Bible is known. That he was able to rise beyond the sphere of physical comfort and pleasure, of practical expediency and sceptic speculation, is

proved conclusively by his admirable and sublime prayer of dedication. Hence the interest which Solomon's life inspires is very different from that called forth by his father David. It appeals to our intellect and to our reason rather than to our human sympathies, to our hopes and fears, our ordinary aims and pursuits. It is less rich and less varied; it touches fewer chords of life and humanity; it reflects less strongly the struggles of man with the powers of the world, and the struggles of the soul with passion and temptation. It is, therefore, devoid of those fervent cries for help, those pangs of contrition and of self-humiliation, those lofty spiritual yearnings, which in David's career remind us at once of our Divine mission and our human frailty. There is something infinitely more invigorating and healthful in David's adventurous exploits on the rugged mountain tops of Judea than in the glittering magnificence of Solomon's luxurious court. Here we find no such clearly defined personages as Joab, or Amasa, or Abishai. Rehoboam and Jeroboam are mentioned with such shadowy vagueness, that they hardly seem to belong to the history of Solomon, and it is only after his death that they grow into individuality. His children appear in no way to have influenced his life. He stands alone and isolated, an imposing and dazzling figure, almost superhuman in his wisdom, to be gazed at with ever new admiration and surprise. The fall of David was touching because human, the fall of Solomon most saddening because intellectual. But though the son had less energy and kept more aloof from the great combats of the world, he had fewer vices, and he committed no crimes. His history may have been clouded by follies, but it was not blackened by treachery and violence. His ambition was purer, loftier, and nobler. His introduction of foreign forms of worship may even have been a bold attempt at establishing one common religion which should connect and embrace all nations. But in all his

doubts and fancies, in all his wavering and restless searchings, he never lost sight of the simplest truths, which guided and saved him on the stormy sea of thought; and he concluded in the ripeness of his experience and old age, as he might have begun in the spring of his youthful freshness, with this plain maxim: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

104. THE DIVISION OF THE EMPIRE.

[1 Kings XI. XII; 2 Chron. X sqq.]

The great Hebrew empire comprising the land between Dan and Beersheba, and many districts east and south of these boundaries, collapsed at the death of king Solomon. It had been created by the valour, perseverance, and ambition of David; it had for a time been kept together by the wisdom, moderation, and magnificence of Solomon; but it imposed upon the people burdens which could not possibly be long endured. The Israelites had cheerfully expended their wealth upon the erection of the stately Temple; they had contributed their treasures, it may be with less alacrity, to complete the gorgeous ornaments of the royal palace, and to defray the enormous expenses of the royal household; but they painfully felt the diminution, if not the exhaustion, of their resources. Even during the latter years of Solomon's life, they were unable to live merrily "every man under his vine and under his fig-tree". They were bent under the weight of levies and imposts, and they began to revolt against the rod of the tax-gatherer. Adoram, one of the king's chief officers, became the special object of popular hatred. Though corrupted by the idolatrous practices that had been favoured in the last part of Solomon's reign, and though weakened by dissensions, the

Hebrews were determined to shake off the oppressive yoke, and to find speedy redress for their wrongs.

It was in this frame of mind that they saw Rehoboam, Solomon's son, ascend the throne. But Rehoboam had a formidable rival in Jeroboam, against whom he could only hope to maintain himself by the loyalty of the whole nation. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, a little town in the territory of Manasseh, was a man full of energy and aspiring ambition. He had first distinguished himself during the fortification of Millo, the citadel of Jerusalem. So much zeal and intelligence did he display on that occasion, that Solomon appointed him overseer over all the public works of Ephraim and Manasseh. But his pretensions rose higher, and they were probably fostered by the impulse they received from the prophet Ahijah. Jeroboam had gone outside the walls of Jerusalem, when he was met by the prophet, who, seeing him, rent his own new cloak into twelve pieces, of which he gave him ten, saying, "Take thee ten pieces; for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee. But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel."

Solomon, warned of Jeroboam's schemes which were the more dangerous because openly supported by prophetic influence, sought to kill him; but Jeroboam escaped and fled into Egypt to the court of the king Shishak. There he lived in regal state, and soon afterwards married an Egyptian princess. But when he heard of king Solomon's death, he returned to Canaan at the request of his kinsmen, and appeared in Shechem among those who had there assembled to anoint Rehoboam. The people seized this occasion to utter their long-restrained complaints, and loudly demanded relief. "Thy father made our yoke grievous", they said to

the new king; "now, therefore, make thou the grievous service of thy father and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee." — Rehoboam, perplexed and wavering, sent the people away, and bid them return in three days to hear his decision. Meanwhile he asked the old counsellors of his father for their advice. They recommended forbearance and leniency towards the people, and said, "If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever." But this advice was not acceptable to the haughty temper of the monarch, and disdainfully rejecting it, he turned to consult the young men, the companions of his youth, who had grown up with him, and from whom he could expect more congenial council. They told him to give this answer to the people: "My little finger is thicker than my father's loins; and now, whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father has chastised you with whips, I will chastise you with scorpions."

On the third day, he addressed the people with these very words, and an instant rebellion broke out. Once again sounded the old cry, "To your tents, O Israel! What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse."

Some tribes of Israel, and especially the Ephraimites, had become too powerful to bow with loyal submission under the sceptre of Judah. They felt that they were able to form an empire of their own, and they eagerly seized this opportunity for carrying out their long cherished plan, which they had more than once betrayed even in the time of the Judges. So strong had Ephraim grown in the north of Canaan, that it there represented all Israel, and the kingdom of Ephraim became another term for the kingdom of Israel. Judah and Benjamin alone remained faithful

to Rehoboam and the house of David; the ten other tribes separated, and proclaimed Jeroboam their king.

Rehoboam, determined not to give up his power without a struggle, sent Adoram, the hated tribute gatherer, to enforce subjection; but Adoram was stoned to death by the infuriated people. Then the king assembled the flower of his army, the brave men of Judah and the fleet warriors of Benjamin, to march against the rebel tribes; but Shemaiah the prophet appeared before the hosts, and in the name of the Lord bid them return to their homes, as they would not prevail. Obedient to his warning, they dispersed, and Rehoboam was compelled to leave the whole of northern Canaan to his rival.

Thus the great empire of Solomon was divided into two kingdoms, that of Judah and that of Israel or Ephraim. The history of each, to be well understood, must be told separately. We shall begin with the northern state, which came to a speedier end.

Judah, the southern empire, comprising merely the old territories of Judah and Benjamin, was the less blooming and fertile of the two kingdoms. Its rugged hill-tops and mountain-crags are familiar to us from the adventures of David. But its climate is invigorating; its people were hardy and bold, its herds of goats and sheep were famous in the land. The men of Judah resisted for the longest time the sword of foreign invaders, and they valiantly shielded their precious treasure, the Temple.

Israel, the northern kingdom, was renowned for its beauty and luxuriant fertility. It included the rich plains of Samaria with their glowing vineyards and waving fields of wheat, the shady groves of Carmel and the wooded heights of Lebanon. It was long called the garden of Palestine. It comprised the whole territory from the frontiers of Benjamin up to Dan at the foot of mount Hermon. Its

splendid line of sea-coast stretched from Sidon almost down to Joppa. Within its boundaries flowed nearly the whole length of the river Jordan, from its source almost to the point where it passes into the Dead Sea.

Both kingdoms were governed by many evil monarchs, and the good reigns were but few; yet the empire of Israel was particularly unfortunate in its kings, its idolatry was the most flagrant and its morality the most corrupt.

X. THE EMPIRE OF ISRAEL OR EPHRAIM.

(975—722.)

105. JEROBOAM (975—954).

[1 Kings XII—XIV; 2 Chron. XIII.]

The kingdom of Judah enjoyed the great advantage of including the capital Jerusalem proudly enthroned upon a fortress of rocks, and of possessing the magnificent Temple, the shrine of the Ark of God. To this one common and sacred spot the entire congregation journeyed three times in the year; and the priests and Levites who officiated within its precincts, were looked upon as specially appointed and hallowed for their sacred functions. Jeroboam was well aware of the love and devotion with which the people clung to the revered House of God, and he painfully felt the want of a similar religious centre in his northern kingdom. He even apprehended danger for the safety of his throne, and he argued: "Now will the kingdom return to the house of David, if this people go up to sacrifice in the House of the Lord at Jerusalem; then will the heart of this people turn again to their master, to Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they will kill me and go again to Rehoboam, king of Judah." — He dwelt in a city which he built upon the site

of the ancient Shechem in Mount Ephraim, and he fortified Penuel as a defence against his enemies. And in order to procure some substitute for the Temple, he consecrated two places for religious worship — one in Bethel, an ancient sanctuary even from the time of the early patriarchs, and therefore dear to the people by many associations; and one in Dan, at the northern boundary of the land. In these two towns he publicly introduced the worship of the Egyptian Apis. Setting up two golden calves for idols, he proclaimed, "Behold thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt;" and as priests of this idolatrous service he appointed men not from the families of Levi, but from any of the tribes of Israel. In imitation of the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated in Jerusalem on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, Jeroboam instituted a festival in the middle of the following month. He went himself to Bethel to offer the first sacrifices at the new sanctuary. In the presence of the whole congregation, he stood before the altar, and was in the act of burning incense to the idol, when suddenly there appeared before him "a man of God" from the land of Judah. The prophet, as if impelled by sudden inspiration, addressed the altar itself: "O altar, altar, thus says the Lord. . . Behold the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out." The enraged king, hearing these words, put forth his hands and called out to his servants, "Lay hold of him!" But his hand withered, the altar was rent, and the ashes fell to the ground. The alarmed king exclaimed, "Entreat now the face of the Lord thy God, and pray for me that my hand may be restored to me again." Upon the prophet's prayer the king's hand was restored. Jeroboam now gratefully entreated the seer to come with him to his palace and refresh himself; but the prophet had been commanded by the Lord to eat no bread and drink no water while on his sacred mission.

So he set out on his way back from Bethel. The whole story of this prophet is mysterious: we know not the city from whence he came, nor the name he bore, nor the meaning of the awful fate which befell him on his return home. There dwelt in Bethel an aged prophet, whose sons had been present at the morning's sacrifice, and who had told him of the strange scenes they had witnessed. Desirous to see and to test this prophet of the Lord, the old man saddled his ass, and rode off to overtake the wayfarer. He found him sitting under the branches of a terebinth, and begged of him to return and eat bread with him in his house. He received the same answer which had been given to the king; but he pressed again, saying, "I am a prophet as thou art, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord saying, Bring him back with thee into thy house, that he may eat bread and drink water." Misled by this feigned vision, the man of Judah went back to Bethel, and sat down at the table of the old prophet. Whilst eating the meal, he heard the voice of the Lord accusing him of disobedience, and foretelling his punishment, that he should not be buried in the grave of his fathers. He rose to leave Bethel, and mounted the ass which the aged prophet had given him. A lion met him on the road, seized and killed him, but neither touched his corpse nor harmed the ass: the body of the dead man lay upon the road, and the lion and the ass stood quietly beside him. Travellers brought the report of this strange occurrence to Bethel. When the old prophet heard it, he at once guessed what had happened, and saddling an ass, he rode forth again, and soon found the body of the man of God. He raised and laid it carefully upon the ass, and brought it back into the city. There he buried it in his own family grave with the repeated cry: "Alas, my brother!" and enjoined upon his sons, that

when he died they should bury him by the side of the prophet.

Strange and striking as this episode was, it seems to have made no lasting impression upon Jeroboam; for we are told that he did not return from his evil ways; he continued the worship of Apis, and allowed all Israelites indiscriminately to perform the duties of priesthood.

Not long afterwards his son Abijah fell dangerously ill. In his sorrow and alarm he bethought himself of the prophet Ahijah, who had so truly foretold his future greatness in the life-time of king Solomon. Ahijah resided in Shiloh; he had probably withdrawn from the sinful court, and looked with no favourable eye upon the misdeeds of the unscrupulous Jeroboam. Nevertheless it was to him that the king bade his wife go in close disguise, with presents of bread, cake, and honey.

Ahijah was now an aged man, and his eyes were fixed and sightless, but he was prepared by the Lord for the visit of the Egyptian princess. When he heard the sound of her feet at his door, he said, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? but I am sent to thee with heavy tidings." Then he predicted the death of her child; the mourning of the whole nation for that child, the only member of her race that would be buried and rest in a grave; the utter ruin and extermination of the house of Jeroboam; the accession of another royal family in Israel; and finally the destruction of the kingdom of Israel itself on account of Jeroboam's idolatry and of the people's wickedness.

With these terrible words still ringing in her ears, the unfortunate queen arose, and returned to the city of Tirzah. As she approached the threshold of her palace, a loud wail announced to her, that her child was dead. He was buried and lamented by the whole people.

Jeroboam reigned twenty-two years over Israel, during which time he was repeatedly forced to take arms and fight against neighbouring tribes, and he was succeeded by his son Nadab.

106. NADAB (954—953).

[1 Kings XV. 25—32.]

He "did evil in the sight of the Lord", and followed in the footsteps of his father, whom he resembled in religious perversion and moral corruption. But his career was cut short by an ambitious man of equal depravity. In the second year of his reign, while he was besieging a small town of the Philistines with his whole army, he was insidiously attacked and murdered by Baasha, the son of Abijah of the tribe of Issachar, who proclaimed himself king of Israel, and was accepted by the people.

107. BAASHA (953—930).

[1 Kings XV. 33—XVI. 7; 2 Chron. XVI. 1—6.]

As he had acquired the throne by violence, so he commenced his infamous reign by bloodshed, for he completely destroyed the house of Jeroboam, until not a single member of the former dynasty was left. He took up his residence in Tirzah, and began to build the city of Ramah on the very confines of Judah, intending it as a key to the rival monarchy. But Asa, the king of Judah, perceiving the danger, concluded a league with Benhadad, the king of Syria, and induced him to make a raid upon the northern provinces of the empire of Israel, hoping to discomfit and to weaken Baasha. Benhadad descended without delay upon the land of Naphtali and the adjoining districts. Baasha, alarmed at the sudden appearance of the enemy, left the southern city of Ramah, and entrenched himself in Tirzah. Ramah was now dismantled by king Asa without difficulty, and the building

materials were taken away to be used for the construction of Geba and Mizpah in Benjamin. The warfare, thus commenced between Asa and Baasha, lasted during the whole extent of their reigns. Asa was a virtuous monarch; but Baasha, though valiant and bold, was unrighteous and godless. He was warned by the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, that on account of his sins he would be cast off like Jeroboam, and that his house would be utterly destroyed like the house of Nebat. Yet he did not mend his ways, and he carried the kingdom of Israel along with him on the path of depravity. He died in the twenty-fourth year of his reign, and was buried in Tirzah. His son Elah followed him.

108. ELAH AND ZIMRI (930—928).

[1 Kings XVI. 8—22.]

The ill-fated king Elah ruled but two short years. Whilst drinking in his capital Tirzah at some wild revel in the house of Arzah, his steward, he was suddenly attacked and murdered by Zimri, the captain of his chariots, who aspired to the kingdom and obtained it.

In his seven days' reign, Zimri utterly exterminated the family of Baasha, but he failed to gain the attachment and loyalty of the people. The army was at that time engaged in warfare against the Philistines, and was encamped before Gibbethon. When the men heard what had occurred in Tirzah, they at once proclaimed Omri, their captain, king of Israel. Raising the siege of Gibbethon, they proceeded to Tirzah which they eventually took. Zimri, seeing himself and the capital in the hands of his opponents, withdrew into the palace, set fire to it with his own hands, and perished in the flames.

A part of the people was in favour of Tibni, the son of Ginath, and proclaimed him king; but Omri finally prevailed, and founded a new dynasty.

109. OMRI (928—918).

[1 Kings XVI. 23—28.]

For six years Omri dwelt in the old capital Tirzah. Then he bought of Shemer for two talents of silver a beautiful hill westward of Tirzah, in the mountain of Ephraim, and on that hill he built the city of Samaria, the rival of Jerusalem, and made it the capital of the north. But he surpassed in deeds of wickedness and cruelty even his worst predecessors, and his name became a curse and a by-word in Israel. Under him the kingdom rapidly advanced towards utter degeneracy. Yet he was not without valour; he carried on a successful war against Damascus, and conquered some towns belonging to its territory. He was buried in Samaria, and his son Ahab succeeded him.

110. AHAB (918—897).

[1 Kings XVI. 29 sqq.]

This reign is undoubtedly one of the most eventful in the annals of Israel. It is treated in the sacred narrative with greater detail than many of the preceding and nearly all the subsequent periods, and it is invested with a peculiar interest by being interwoven with the life and work of Elijah, the great prophet of Israel, who stands out clear and prominent among a large number of less distinguished prophets and seers. Ahab himself was a contemptible monarch, more feeble than wicked, and completely under the evil influence of his queen Jezebel, a heathen princess, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Zidon. Fierce, revengeful, and ambitious, Jezebel easily established her dominion in the kingdom of Israel, and exerted the power of a strong and indomitable will over the wavering and fickle mind of the king. A fanatic worshipper of Baal, she built high places all over the land, raised altars, and caused countless sacrifices to be

burnt to the idols. No less than eight hundred and fifty priests of Baal and Ashtarte sat at her table as her daily guests. On the other hand, she commenced a ruthless persecution of the Hebrew prophets, which continued unabated during her whole reign.

Jezreel, a new city, considerably north of Shechem, in the province of Issachar, delightfully situated in the woody heights of mount Gilboa, became one of the favourite royal residences. There rose the palace of queen Jezebel, and there stood probably the famous house of ivory. Many cities sprang up during Ahab's reign; amongst others Jericho, which Hiel re-built from the ruins in which it had lain since the blast of Joshua's trumpets.

During Ahab's reign a terrible calamity fell upon the land, one of the most fearful scourges that can visit an Eastern country.

111. THE PROPHET ELIJAH.

[1 Kings XVII.]

It is in connection with this fearful trial that Elijah, the Tishbite, first came forward as a messenger of God. There is something mysterious and marvellous in the whole account of Elijah. We cannot help being impressed by the story of his solitary life, of his sudden appearances, of his rapid journeys, and his indifference to danger, and above all by the very picture conjured up before us of that stern and grand figure, girt with a leather belt, and wrapped in his long sweeping mantle, which, uplifted like a staff divided the waters of the Jordan, or unfolded as a veil hid the mourning face of the prophet.

From Gilead came Elijah to king Ahab with these tidings: "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I

stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except according to my word."

Having uttered this decree, the prophet quickly retired to the brook of Cherith near the river Jordan, and remained in that secluded spot at the command of the Lord. "And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the brook." But in time the severe drought dried up the springs, and the brook of Cherith gave no more water. Then the Lord bid Elijah arise, and go to Zarephath, one of the northern towns belonging to Zidon, where a certain widow would sustain him. Obedient to the summons, Elijah journeyed northwards, and came to the gate of the city, where he beheld a woman gathering sticks, and he called her and said, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." As she was going to comply with his request, he called her again and said, "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand." Then the poor widow answered, "As the Lord thy God lives, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks, that I may go in, and dress it for me and my son that we may eat it, and die." And Elijah said to her, "Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first and bring it me, and after that make for thee and thy son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth." The widow did all that Elijah told her, and he dwelt with her for many days. "The barrel of meal did not waste, and the cruse of oil did not fail, according to the word of the Lord which He had spoken through Elijah." Suddenly the son of the poor widow fell dangerously ill, and his life was despaired of. The mother came to the prophet in an agony of grief. "What have I

to do with thee, O thou man of God?" she exclaimed; "art thou come to me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" — "Give me thy son," was Elijah's answer; and he took the child out of her arms, and carried him up into a loft where he himself slept, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried to the Lord and said, "O Lord, my God, hast Thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?" Then he stretched himself three times upon the child, and cried to the Lord and said, "O Lord, my God, I pray Thee, let this child's soul come unto him again." His supplication was heard, and the child recovered. He then took him down to his mother, and said, "See, thy son lives." And the widow exclaimed with reverence, "Now by this I know, that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."

112. ELIJAH AND THE PRIESTS OF BAAL.

[1 Kings XVIII.]

For three years no rain fell in the land of Samaria, and grievous was the famine occasioned by the drought. The grass and the crops were burnt up, and the cattle were starving for want of food. Now Obadiah, the governor of the royal household, was a pious and godfearing man; during the fierce persecutions of queen Jezebel he had defied her wrath by hiding a hundred true prophets in two of the numerous mountain retreats, and had there supplied them with food and drink. He revered and loved Elijah, whom he longed above all to shield from Jezebel's relentless vengeance. Both met unexpectedly in the land of Samaria. The interview probably took place in the vicinity of Jezreel; for Ahab had commanded the faithful Obadiah to go forth in all parts of the country and find some plot of fresh grass where the starving cattle might graze. Obadiah

fell on his face before the prophet, exclaiming, "Art thou that my lord Elijah?" — "I am," was the answer; "go, tell thy master, Behold, Elijah is here." Obadiah trembled at this command, and he said, "What have I sinned, that thou wouldst deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? As the Lord thy God lives, there is no nation nor kingdom, whither my lord has not sent to seek thee; and when they said, he is not there, he took an oath of the kingdom and nation that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy master, Behold, Elijah is here. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth." Yet at last, urged by the prophet, he returned and told the king of his interview with Elijah. Ahab set forth at once to meet him. As he saw the prophet, he exclaimed, "Art thou he that troubles Israel?" Elijah answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now, therefore, send and gather to me all Israel to mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of Ashtarte four hundred, who eat at Jezebel's table." Ahab complied with the request. Upon one of the eminences of mount Carmel, where the eye wanders over a mass of sea and sand, of wood and plain, near an ancient altar of Jehovah, an extraordinary scene was to be enacted.

Thither went thronging the Israelites, the inhabitants of the northern kingdom; there were gathered the prophets of Baal and the priests of the high places, and Ahab the king appeared in his royal splendour, and there came the prophet Elijah, the messenger and servant of the Lord. Towering above all others, he faced the people, and asked sternly,

"How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, then follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him!" The people heard these words in remorseful silence. Again rang forth the voice of Elijah: "I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them, therefore, give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood and put no fire under it; and I will dress the other bullock, and put no fire under it. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answers by fire, let him be God." And all the people answered, "It is well spoken." Then Elijah bid the prophets of Baal choose the bullock and prepare it for the sacrifice. So the animal was slain, cut in pieces, and laid on the altar. The priests called upon their god Baal. From early morning until the heat of the midday, they cried continually, "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no sign of an answer. As was their custom on similar occasions, they leaped round the altar while repeating their prayers and invocations. Elijah could not refrain from bitter irony. "Cry aloud", he said, "for he is a god! Either he is meditating, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleeps and must be awaked." Then the priests cried louder and louder, and in their frantic excitement they cut themselves with knives until the blood gushed forth from their wounds; and they shouted and called and leapt wildly from the hot noon until the day faded into evening. But there was yet no sign of an answer. Then Elijah said to the eager people, "Come near to me." Taking twelve stones according to the number of the Hebrew tribes, he erected an altar, round which he ordered a wide trench to be made. Then he arranged the wood on the altar, and slaying the bullock, he prepared it for the sacrifice. Thrice were four barrels of water poured

out, so that the offering, and the altar, and the deep trench were completely filled with the water. It was in the last glow of the waning daylight that Elijah drew near to the sacrifice, and pronounced this prayer: "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and thus turn Thou their hearts back again."

He had hardly uttered these words, when "the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." At that sight the amazed multitude prostrated themselves and exclaimed, "The Lord He is God, the Lord He is God." But terrible was Elijah's vengeance on the false priests of the idol. "Take the prophets of Baal," he commanded the people, "and let not one of them escape!" The people rushed upon them, and at the bidding of Elijah they led them down to the brook Kishon which runs winding at the foot of mount Carmel, and there they slew them all.

Then Elijah said to the king, "Get up, eat and drink, for there is the noisy sound of rain." So Ahab went up to one of the heights of Carmel where the repast was spread, while the prophet Elijah went to a solitary place on the mountain for meditation and prayer. Meantime his servant stood upon the ridge of the elevation, and looked forth over the blue waters of the Mediterranean. As at the prophet's request he gazed up into the pure evening sky, he said, "There is nothing." Again and again Elijah bid him look out; but it was only the seventh time that he saw a little cloud rising over the sea "no bigger than a man's hand." Then Elijah knew that the storm and the rain were coming, and he said to his servant, "Go up and say to Ahab,

Prepare thy chariot and get down, lest the rain stop thee." The whole heaven was black with clouds, and the wind rose and drove the rain down in torrents. Ahab fled before the storm, and rode into Jezreel; but the breath of the Lord seized Elijah, and carried him on before Ahab to the entrance of the city.

113. FLIGHT OF ELIJAH; ELISHA APPOINTED AS HIS SUCCESSOR.

[1 Kings XIX.]

When the king related to Jezebel the story of the wonderful sacrifice on mount Carmel and of the massacre of the priests, her wrath knew no bounds. She sent at once a messenger to Elijah with these words: "So let the gods do to me and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of anyone of them by to-morrow about this time." — Elijah, who had calmly faced the king and a host of priests, took alarm at this message, and fled from Jezebel out of the land of Israel to Beersheba, at the southern frontier of Judah. There he left his servant and wandered away alone into the wilderness. In a moment of despondency and deep disappointment, he cast himself down on the ground beneath a juniper tree, and, wearied by flight, he prayed, as so many sufferers have prayed in their agony and privation, that he might die. "It is enough now, O Lord," he cried, "take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." As he lay down and fell asleep exhausted under the juniper tree, an angel touched him and said, "Arise and eat." He looked and saw beside him a cake and a cruse of water. Then he ate and drank, and laid himself down again to sleep. For the second time the angel touched him and bade him arise and eat, because "a very great journey was before him." Again he took food, and "in the strength of that meal he went

forty days and forty nights to mount Horeb, the mount of God." There he took refuge in one of the mountain caves. The next day the word of God came to him with this question: "What doest thou here Elijah? And he said, I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thy altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away." And then again, as on the heights of Carmel, the Lord manifested Himself to Elijah. First came "a great and strong wind which rent the mountains and broke the rock in pieces, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. When Elijah heard this, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and he went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then again came the voice saying, What doest thou here Elijah?" And Elijah gave the same answer as before. Then the Lord, raising the oppressed spirit of the prophet, commanded him to do his appointed work. "Go", He said to him, "return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus; and when thou comest there, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; and Jehu, the son of Nimṣhi, shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapes the sword of Hazael, shall Jehu slay, and him that escapes from the sword of Jehu, shall Elisha slay." One consolation the prophet carried with him; he learnt that, in the land of Israel, there were, unknown to him, seven thousand true and faithful men, who had never bent their knees to Baal.

So Elijah departed and went northward to Damascus. On his way he found at Abel-meholah, a village in Issachar,

Elisha ploughing in the fields with twelve yokes of oxen. He flung his mantle over the shoulder of the youth, who instantly understood the meaning of this symbolical act, left the oxen, followed Elijah, and ministered to him.

114. WAR OF AHAB WITH BENHADAD.

[1 Kings XX.]

Benhadad, the king of Syria, tempted by the riches and beauty of Samaria, resolved upon a great war against Israel. He assembled his hosts, and invited moreover thirty-two of the neighbouring chiefs or kings to join him. At the head of an immense army he besieged Samaria, and sent the following insolent summons to Ahab: "Thy silver and thy gold are mine, thy wives and thy children, even the fairest, are mine." Ahab, as weak and cowardly as ever, answered, "My lord, O king, according to thy saying I am thine, and all that I have is thine." But Benhadad wished to provoke Ahab to actual warfare; so he sent him a second and even more insulting message which had the desired effect: he said, he would come to the king's palace, search it, and take whatever he liked best. Now Ahab's anger was roused, and he refused to submit to the humiliation. His resistance only called forth the mockery of Benhadad; but the king of Israel rightly said, "Tell him, let not him that girds on his harness boast himself as he that puts it off." To inspire Ahab with courage, a prophet, Elijah perchance, appeared before him and foretold the success of his arms over the vast Syrian host. The prophet's prediction came true; a portion of the Israelite army, consisting of young nobles, surprised the Syrian chiefs whilst carousing in their tents, and following up the first panic they had created, they discomfited their enemies who retreated with great loss. Benhadad saved himself by flight on one of his swift Syrian horses. Al-

though he had been utterly defeated, he was persuaded to recommence hostilities in the following spring, and he assembled another army large and splendid as the first. But instead of princes he placed experienced captains at the head of the different divisions of his hosts, and prepared for battle. His counsellors had told him: "The gods of the Israelites are gods of the hills, therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and we shall be stronger than they." He, therefore, went out and encamped in the plain of Aphek, where he was soon met by the Hebrew army, a mere handful compared with his own large numbers—"the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country."

Then again a prophet came to Ahab, foretelling success. For six days the armies faced each other in silence, and on the seventh day they met. A hundred thousand Syrians were slain by the Israelites; the rest escaped to the town Aphek, where many were destroyed by a falling wall. Benhadad fled for refuge from house to house; he still clung to life and to the hope of being spared by Ahab. His followers said to him, "Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; peradventure he will save thy life." The chiefs acted upon this advice, and when they appeared before the king of Israel, they addressed him thus: "Thy servant Benhadad says, I pray thee, let me live." Ahab answered compassionately, "Is he yet alive? he is my brother." — This was enough; the messengers knew that Benhadad had nothing to fear. They brought him to the king of Israel, whose heart was touched at the sight of the captive monarch, concluded peace with him, and unwisely allowed him to depart in safety.

115. MURDER OF NABOTH.

[1 Kings XXI.]

Closely adjoining Ahab's palace in Jezreel, was a beautiful vineyard belonging to a man of the name of Naboth. This property was coveted by the king who sent for Naboth, and said to him, "Give me thy vineyard that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near my house, and I will give thee for it a better vineyard, or if it seems good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money." But Naboth would not surrender the ground; it was dear to him, because he had inherited it from his fathers, and he refused all offers however tempting. Then Ahab went into his house dejected and displeased: he, the great monarch, had been baulked of his desire by one of his subjects; so "he lay upon his bed, and turned away his face and would not eat." Not long afterwards came Jezebel, fierce and malignant as ever; she pressed Ahab to tell her what troubled him, and when she heard his complaint, she exclaimed indignantly, "Dost thou not govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry; I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

Then Jezebel wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent them herself to the elders and nobles of the city. She commanded these chiefs to proclaim a fast, to set Naboth high among the people, and to bring forward two men to testify that he had uttered blasphemies against God and the king, and then upon their accusations to stone him to death. The elders obediently executed the commands of the ruthless queen; two wicked men were easily found to bear false witness against Naboth; he was declared guilty, and stoned to death before the gates of the city. — When this foul deed was accomplished, Jezebel went triumphantly to her husband, and bade him arise and

take possession of the vineyard which he had desired, and which Naboth would not sell for money. The weak monarch arose from his couch, and went forth into his ill-gotten vineyard. There he was confronted by that well-known form shrouded in a rough hairy mantle, and he heard again the voice of Elijah the Tishbite: "Hast thou killed also and taken possession? Thus says the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." Then Ahab exclaimed in fear, "Hast thou found me, O my enemy?" The answer of Elijah conveyed to the terrified monarch the awful doom which awaited his entire house: "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel; him that dies of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat, and him that dies in the field the fowls of the air shall eat." Ahab, alarmed by these words, was struck with remorse and contrition; he rent his clothes and put sackcloth on his body. "And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbles himself before Me? because he humbles himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house."

116. DEATH OF AHAB.

[1 Kings XXII. 1–40; 2 Chron. XVIII.]

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, had sought a friendly alliance with Ahab. Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, was given in marriage to Joram, the heir to the throne of Judah, and Jehoshaphat himself paid friendly visits to the king of Israel in Samaria. During one of these visits it occurred to Ahab, that the city of Ramoth Gilead, which had once belonged to the Hebrews, but had been taken from them by the Syrians, ought to be re-conquered.

The two kings agreed at once to prepare for war and commence hostilities together; but Jehoshaphat insisted upon

first asking the advice of the prophets, as a good augury would strengthen them in their perilous enterprise. Four hundred prophets who appeared at his call, probably prophets of Baal, predicted victory and the safe return of the kings. But Jehoshaphat was not content with their words, and desired to hear the counsel of a prophet of the Lord. Elijah must at that time have been far away, secluded in one of his solitary haunts; for he is not mentioned; instead of him we hear of Micaiah the son of Imlah, a man who was hated by Ahab for always prophesying evil to him and never good. Yet messengers were sent, to bring Micaiah to the city. When the prophet arrived at the gates of Samaria, he beheld, seated side by side on their thrones, the two kings dressed in their robes of state; before them stood the crowd of prophets, and a large number of people attracted by the scene.

Encouragingly the prophets were exclaiming, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it into the king's hand;" and Zedekiah, one of Ahab's servants, held up two huge horns of iron and said, "With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou shalt have consumed them." Then Micaiah was called upon to speak, and he related a vision which had just been revealed to him. "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills," he said, "as sheep that have no shepherd, and the Lord said, These have no master, let them return every man to his house." — "Did I not tell thee," exclaimed Ahab enraged to Jehoshaphat, "that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?" Then Micaiah spoke again, but this time the vision which he described was of a grander and more imaginative character. He saw the whole host of heaven, and the Lord Himself upon His throne. He heard the Lord asking His counsellors, "Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? And one spoke in this manner,

and another spoke in that manner. And there came forth a spirit and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him! I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets! And the Lord said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also; go forth and do so. Now therefore," continued the prophet boldly, "the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord has spoken evil concerning thee." At these words, the infuriated Zedekiah smote him on the cheek, accompanying the stroke with insulting words; and Ahab bid Amon, the governor of the city, imprison him with bread and water, until he, the king, should return in safety from the war. As Micaiah was led away, he cried again ominous words into Ahab's ears: "If thou return at all in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me . . . hearken, O people, every one of you!"

Heedless of Micaiah's warning, the kings set out on their expedition. Yet Ahab took the precaution to wear the dress of a common soldier, in order to deceive the enemy. The king of Syria cared less for the issue of the war than for the capture of Ahab's person. "Fight neither with small nor great," he enjoined upon his captains, "but only with the king of Israel." The royal robes of Jehoshaphat misled for a time the heathen warriors, who took him for Ahab; but they desisted from attacking him, as soon as they became aware of their error. Yet Ahab, in spite of his disguise did not escape. A Syrian archer, drawing his bow at random, shot an arrow through one of the joints of the king's armour. When Ahab felt the mortal wound, he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn thy hand, and carry me out of the host, for I am wounded." But struck as he was, he showed a truly heroic spirit, and would not leave the chariot as long as the battle raged: he stood upright behind his driver, whilst the blood oozed slowly from his wound and covered

the chariot. In the evening, when the battle was over and lost, he died, and was brought to Samaria, where he was buried. But the awful words of Elijah were literally fulfilled; for whilst the men were washing the blood-stained chariot in the pool outside the city, the wild dogs that ran in hordes round the walls, came and licked up the blood of the king. When the sad fate of Ahab was known, the army was dispersed with the proclamation, "Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!"

Ahab was succeeded by his son Ahaziah.

117. AHAZIAH (897—895).

[1 Kings XXII. 52—54; 2 Kings I.]

During this reign, the Moabites rebelled and refused to pay the tribute that had been imposed upon them, and declared themselves free from all allegiance to Israel.

Once whilst looking out of a lattice window in the upper chamber of his palace in Samaria, the king fell out and became dangerously ill. Always clinging to habits of idolatry, he sent some of his servants to enquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether he would recover. The messengers departed, but returned almost immediately. For outside the city they were met by a stranger, who bid them go back to their king with the tiding that he should certainly die. They described the person who had thus spoken to them as "a man in a hairy garment, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins." Ahaziah knew him well. "It is Elijah the Tishbite!" he exclaimed. He was anxious to get that stern and unflinching spirit in his power. So he sent after him a captain with a band of fifty men. They descried Elijah upon the top of a mountain, possibly upon one of the crags of Carmel, and they bid him come down and go with them to the king. For all answer fire descended from heaven, and consumed

the captain and his fifty men. Again Ahaziah sent out another captain and his fifty men, and again fire from heaven destroyed them. For the third time a captain and fifty men came to the foot of the mountain; but the captain went up, threw himself on his knees, and implored Elijah to spare them. Then the prophet came down, and accompanied them to the king. He fearlessly foretold Ahaziah's death, which occurred almost directly after the interview. Ahaziah had no sons, and he was succeeded by his brother Jehoram.

118. ELIJAH'S DISAPPEARANCE AND THE FIRST MIRACLES OF ELISHA.

[2 Kings II.]

Elijah was dwelling at Gilgal with Elisha, when the call came which was to end his earthly labours. Foreboding the Divine will, he said to his devoted follower, "Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha, with that strong and faithful attachment to his master which he had evinced from the first, was unwilling to leave him at a time when he felt that some great crisis was at hand. So the two went together to Bethel. There, at that sacred and time-honoured place, were gathered the prophets and seers of the Lord. They also were aware of the mournful event that was about to happen. At the approach of Elijah and Elisha, they came forth from their houses and said to Elisha, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" And he said, "Yes, I know it, hold ye your peace." Then again Elijah entreated his disciple to leave him, for the Lord had summoned him to Jericho. But Elisha steadily refused to depart from him, and both went on together to the southern town. There the same

scene was enacted as at Bethel — the prophets crowding round the master they were so soon to lose, and telling Elisha the tidings he knew already too well. But Elijah was ordered to go eastward, to the banks of the river Jordan; thither he went with Elisha, who unflinchingly clung to him. They were followed by fifty of the prophets who came with them out of Jericho, and stood watching them at some distance. When Elijah approached the brink of the river, he drew his mantle from his shoulders, and rolling it up like a staff, he smote the waters, which separated, leaving in the midst a dry road over which the two passed. — Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask, what shall I do for thee, before I am taken away from thee?" And Elisha said, "I pray thee, let two portions of thy spirit be upon me." — Upon which Elijah replied, "Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou seest me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so to thee; but if not, it shall not be so." — "And it came to pass, as they still went on and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Elisha saw his great master no more, and in his bitter grief he rent his garments. Elijah's mantle had fallen to the ground; he took it, and standing again on the brink of the Jordan, he smote with it the waters and exclaimed loudly, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" Then the river parted for him again, and he passed over the dry ground. When the prophets saw this from afar, they were convinced that the spirit of Elijah now rested upon Elisha. They came to meet him and bowed themselves with reverence before him. But they could not believe that Elijah was gone from them for ever. They entreated, therefore, Elisha to let them seek for their master, "for peradventure the spirit of the Lord has taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley." Elisha at

first resisted their desire, but at last he yielded, and the prophets went out on their fruitless search.

Whilst Elisha was at Jericho, the men of the town came to him and said, "Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees, but the water is bad, and the land causes barrenness." Then Elisha performed another miracle; he asked for a new cruse filled with salt. This salt he cast into the spring and spoke, "Thus says the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from them any more death or barrenness."

After this the prophet left Jericho and journeyed back to Bethel. On his way a crowd of children ran out of the city, mocking him. "Go up, thou bald head," they called out; "go up, thou bald head." For a moment a spirit of revenge and anger foreign to his nature came over Elisha; "he cursed the children in the name of the Lord." His curse took effect; two bears coming from the wood killed forty-two of the unfortunate children. Elisha proceeded to mount Carmel and from thence he went to Samaria. He was indeed constantly journeying between Carmel, his ordinary place of residence, and Samaria, Bethel, and Gilgal. Unlike Elijah, he appears to have had no predilection for solitary retreats, but mixed freely with all men. He was often the counsellor of the king, by whom he was regarded with no hatred or ill-feeling.

119. JEHORAM, KING OF ISRAEL (895—854).

[2 Kings III.]

Jehoram was no Baal worshipper; he zealously removed the idols set up by his mother, cut down the groves, and abolished the numerous high places consecrated to foreign worship. But he allowed the golden calves to remain in Dan

and in Bethel, and clung to the pernicious idolatry established by Jeroboam.

He was incensed against the king of Moab for refusing to pay the imposed tribute, and he incited Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to a joint expedition against him. The two kings, at the head of their combined armies, set forth upon their march into the Moabite territory. Their road lay through the wilderness of Edom; and here they were re-inforced by the king of that country at the head of a large army. After a seven days' journey, they were tormented by want of water, and the kings felt that they were in imminent danger of falling a prey to the enemy.

It was then that Jehoshaphat, as once before on a similar occasion, desired to consult a prophet of the true God, and to act upon his counsel. The prophet was near at hand — Elisha, the successor of Elijah. His words were as stern as those of his master. Turning to Jehoram he said, "What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father and thy mother. . . . As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee nor regard thee." He sent for a minstrel, and bade him play. With the strains of music the spirit of the Lord came over His prophet. Elisha bid the kings dig huge ditches in front of their camp. At the close of the day, the ditches were completed, and by the light of the following morning the thirsting soldiers beheld them filled with a fresh stream of water. The Moabites from their camp looked upon the ditches, and the water gleaming in the red sunlight seemed to them a river of blood. They imagined that there had been strife and bloodshed in the army of the allies, and they hastened to their camp in the hope of finding rich spoil. But they were met by a fierce and determined band of warriors, by whom they were beaten back and

pursued into the very heart of their own country, where their cities were destroyed, their wells stopped up, their best fields filled with stones, and their fruit-trees cut down. As a last resource, the king of Moab, with 700 chosen men, made a desperate sally upon the Edomite army, but without effect. Vanquished in the field, beaten in his own cities, the king of Moab, wishing to propitiate his gods, sacrificed his eldest son publicly upon the walls as a burnt-offering. Amazed by this act of atrocious fanaticism, the allied armies left the territory of Moab, and returned to their own country.

120. ELISHA.

[2 Kings IV. 1 — VIII. 15.]

The fame of Elisha's power and mission grew rapidly. A poor woman, a widow of one of the prophets, came to him in her grief and distress: her husband had died in debt, and the creditors had come to take away her two sons as servants instead of payment. Elisha asked her compassionately, "What shall I do for thee? tell me what hast thou in the house?" She answered, "Thy handmaid has not anything in the house save a pot of oil." Then he bid her borrow of her neighbours as many vessels as they would lend her; and into all these vessels should she pour oil from the one pot which was in her house. The widow followed Elisha's command without a question. And now her little supply of oil seemed indeed endless, for there was enough to fill all the vessels she had brought together, and there was more to spare. She went to the man of God and told him of the miracle. And he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest."

Whilst journeying through the kingdom of Israel, Elisha would often pass through the northern town of Shu-

nem. In this little town dwelt a man rich in flocks and herds, the master of many servants who worked in his fields and tended his cattle. Both he and his wife were pious and godfearing. They would always invite the prophet to rest and eat bread in their house. The wife especially watched for him on his constant journeys, and knowing that he was a true prophet, she said to her husband, "Let us make a little upper chamber, I pray thee, with walls, and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and it shall be when he comes to us that he shall turn in thither." The proposal was carried out, and the next time Elisha came to Shunem, he was taken into the chamber prepared for him, and he remained there. Then he sent Gehazi, his servant, to call his hostess to him. When she came, he asked her: "Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldst thou be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the host?" But declining royal favours or gifts, she answered simply, "I dwell among my own people." When she had left the chamber, Elisha asked counsel of his servant, "What then is to be done for her?" Gehazi answered, "Verily, she has no child, and her husband is old." Then Elisha called her again and said, "About this season in the next year thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thy handmaid."

At the predicted time, a son was born to her, and the boy grew. Once during the harvest time it happened that he went out into the fields to his father, who was then among the reapers. The heat of the noontide sun struck the child, and he exclaimed piteously, "My head, my head!" At his father's desire, he was taken back to his mother. Pillowed in her arms he died. She rose and carried him quietly into the chamber set apart for Elisha: and laying him upon the prophet's bed, she closed the door, and left him there. Then

she requested her husband who was probably still unaware of their son's death, to send her one of the young men and one of the asses, for she desired to go without delay to the man of God. Her husband remonstrated: "Wherefore wilt thou go to-day? it is neither new-moon nor sabbath." — But she merely answered, "Let it be." Then she mounted her ass, and bid her servant drive it on in haste. Elisha, looking out from his dwelling on mount Carmel, recognised from afar the Shunamite, and full of concern for the hospitable and generous woman, he sent Gehazi to meet her and to ask if it was well with herself, her husband, and child. She only said, "It is well," and hurried on. At last she came to Elisha, and threw herself upon the ground, grasping his feet. Gehazi was about to thrust her away, when the man of God said, "Let her alone, for her soul is vexed within her; and the Lord has hid it from me and has not told me." Then she said, "Did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say, Do not deceive me?" These words were enough; Elisha divined all. He gave Gehazi his staff, and ordered him to go in breathless haste to the city of Shunem, and to lay his staff upon the dead child. The servant hurried on to do his master's bidding, and the prophet followed with the Shunamite. When they approached the threshold of the house, Gehazi came to meet them and said, "The child is not awakened." Then Elisha repaired to his own little chamber, where the child lay dead, and he prayed long and fervently to the Lord for help; after which he went up to the child and lay upon him, putting his own mouth upon the boy's mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, his hands upon his hands, until the child grew warm and opened his eyes. Then he bade Gehazi call the Shunamite; and as his master Elijah had said to the poor widow whose son he had restored, so Elisha now said to the Shunamite, "Take up thy son!" And when she came, she fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground, and then taking up her son, she went out.

From Shunem Elisha proceeded to Gilgal, which had been visited by a long dearth. He appeared before a large assembly of prophets who were suffering from the famine. He bid his servant set on a large pot and cook a meal for all the prophets; one of the young men went into the fields to seek for herbs; there he found a wild vine, of which he gathered a quantity of gourds; and returning home, he put them into the pottage. The wild gourds, if not poisonous, were at least very hurtful. When the pottage had been poured out, one of the men who had eaten of it, exclaimed, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot!" But Elisha ordered them to bring some flour, which he mixed with the pottage, and which allayed the evil, so that the prophets could eat of the meal unharmed.

About that time a man came from Baal-shalisha to Gilgal, and brought Elisha twenty loaves of barley and full ears of corn in a sack. The prophet said, "Give to the people that they may eat." This seemed strange to Gehazi. "How should I set this before a hundred men?" he asked. But Elisha repeated, "Give the people that they may eat, for thus says the Lord, They shall eat and leave thereof." — "So he set it before them, and they did eat and leave thereof, according to the word of the Lord."

But Elisha's fame reached Syria, and the name of the Lord was to be acknowledged and reverenced in the land of the heathen.

Naaman, the brave and successful general of the Syrian army, though prosperous and powerful, was unfortunately afflicted with that direst of Eastern scourges, leprosy. His wife had a little Hebrew maid-servant, a captive out of the land of Israel, who saw with grief and pity the sad fate of the Syrian captain. "Would God," she said to her mistress, "my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would restore him from his leprosy." Her words were repeated to

Naaman; and yet again were they repeated until they came to the ears of the king of Syria. The king, little imagining it was Elisha who could effect the cure, bid Naaman journey to the king of Israel with the most costly presents, and at the same time he gave him a letter to Jehoram. "Behold," so wrote the Syrian monarch, "I have therewith sent my servant Naaman to thee, that thou mayest restore him from his leprosy." When Jehoram read this letter, he thought it was a snare to entice him into a feud; he rent his clothes and lamented; but Elisha hearing of the king's alarm, sent a messenger to him with these words: "Wherefore hast thou now rent thy garments? Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman, the proud captain, came with his horses and his chariots, and stood at the door of the prophet's house. Elisha did not appear, but he sent down a messenger to say to him: "Go, and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." This simple request seemed like an insult to Naaman; he burst into a fit of anger, for he had expected that Elisha would come out and call upon the name of the Lord, and place his hand upon the leprous skin, and thus cure the evil. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus,[2] he exclaimed, "better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" But his servants calmed him, and confiding in the efficacy of the easy and simple remedy which the prophet had suggested, they said: "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then when he says to thee, Wash and be clean!" Naaman was soothed and followed the advice; he went and dipped seven times in the Jordan, "and his flesh came again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

With sincere humility and gratitude he returned to Elisha, and standing before him, he said in the presence of

all his people: "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; now, therefore, I pray thee, take a present of thy servant." But the prophet refused everything, and firmly resisted Naaman's most urgent entreaties. Then the general departed, after swearing solemnly that thenceforth he would offer sacrifices to none but the one true God.

But when Gehazi saw the great captain leave Samaria taking all his costly presents back with him, he felt a strong temptation to obtain some of those precious treasures. So he hastened after Naaman, who seeing him approach, alighted from his chariot, and full of reverence and solicitude for Elisha, asked, "Is all well?" Then Gehazi invented the following tale: "My master has sent me, saying, 'Behold, just now there came to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets; give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver and two changes of garments.'" Naaman at once replied, "Be content to take two talents." And he urged him and bound two talents of silver in two bags together with two changes of garments, and gave these things to two of his servants to carry them before Gehazi. When he came to the hill near Samaria where he lived, he took the money and the garments from the men, and brought them into his house. After the Syrians had returned, he went to his master, and when he entered, he was asked by Elisha, "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" and he boldly answered, "Thy servant went nowhere." Then the prophet said sternly, "Did not my heart go with thee, when the man turned from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money and to receive garments, and olive gardens and vineyards, and sheep and oxen and menservants and maidservants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave to thee and to thy seed for ever." — "And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow."

Unlike Elijah, who commonly dwelt alone among the

crags of rocks, or near some secluded brook or streamlet, Elisha was surrounded by a school of prophets who were growing into such a numerous band, that their ordinary place of abode became too small for them. So they suggested that they should all remove to the banks of the Jordan, and there cut down the trees of a dense forest, and build a large house where they might live together. Elisha not only approved of their proposal, but consented to accompany them eastward to the Jordan. There, at the riverside, a remarkable miracle was performed. Whilst one of the young men was hewing down the wood, his axehead fell into the water, and he exclaimed, "Alas, master! and it was borrowed." Then Elisha asked, "Where did it fall?" and upon being shown the spot, he cast a stick into the water, and the iron was seen swimming on the surface. The prophet said, "Take it up to thee;" and the young man put out his hand and took it.

121. WARS OF JEHORAM AND ELISHA'S HELP.

[2 Kings VI. 8 sqq.]

The king of Syria, Benhadad, was during all this time attacking and harassing the Israelites; his plan was to surprise them where they least expected it; but Elisha always knew his intentions, warned Jehoram of the danger, and thus saved him repeatedly from falling into the power of the enemy. The king of Syria supposed that there were traitors among his own subjects, but he was soon convinced, that it was Elisha, the great prophet, who always frustrated his designs. He, therefore, bid his servants bring Elisha into his presence. A great number of men went out with horses and chariots, and surrounded by night the city of Dothan, where the prophet was dwelling. In the morning, his servant, as he looked out, beheld this large host, and he exclaimed, "Alas! my master, what shall we do?" But Elisha

told him to give up all fear, as the number of his own warriors was even larger than that of his enemies; and then he prayed to the Lord to open his servant's eyes that he might see. The young man looked, and, "behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." When the Syrians were encompassing his house, he entreated the Lord to smite them with blindness, and his supplication was answered. "This is not the way," he said to them, "neither is this the city; follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." And he led them to Samaria. Then Elisha prayed to the Lord to open the eyes of the men that they might see, and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. When the king of Israel became aware that his enemies were in his hands, he said, "My father, shall I smite them?" But the gentlehearted prophet advised the king to spare their lives, to set bread and water before them, and send them back to their master. So Jehoram prepared a great feast for the Syrians and allowed them to depart in peace to Benhadad.

But the Syrian king, still intent upon the conquest of Samaria, assembled his whole army and besieged the capital of Israel. Added to the horrors of the war were the horrors of a seven years' famine, which had been predicted by Elisha. The prospects of the inhabitants were indeed gloomy. An ass' head was sold for eight shekels of silver, and the fourth part of a kab of pigeon 'dung for five shekels. When the king was one day walking on the walls, and looked down upon the bare and parched country without, and upon the starved and wretched city within, the plaintive wail of a woman suddenly struck his ear. "Help, my lord O king," she cried. The king's answer came from the very depth of his despair: "If the Lord does not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn floor, or out of the wine press? What ails thee?" He could not have anticipated her horrible answer. "This

woman said to me," she replied, pointing to her companion in misery, 'Give thy son that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow;' so we boiled my son, and did eat him; and I said to her on the next day, 'give thy son that we may eat him'; and now she has hid her son." When the king heard these words, he rent his clothes, and as he passed along the wall, the people saw that he was wearing sackcloth. But in spite of this sign of humiliation, his heart was fast hardening against Elisha, to whom he attributed the evils of the war and the famine; he swore an oath that he would have the prophet's life that very day, and he at once sent out a man to seize him. Elisha knew of the approach of the king's messenger, who was followed by the king himself; he bid his attendants tightly close the door, for "the son of the murderer" had sent to take his life. Yet he admitted the messenger, who, more pious than his master, said, "Behold, this evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" Then Elisha said to the king: "Hear ye the word of the Lord; thus says the Lord, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria." One of Jehoram's officers, the charioteer upon whose hand he leaned, derided the prophecy, and said, "Indeed, the Lord will make windows in heaven!" Elisha replied, "Behold, thou shalt see it with thy eyes, but shalt not eat thereof."

At the gate of Samaria sat four leprous men excluded from the town and shunned by their Hebrew brethren. Tormented by hunger, they resolved to throw themselves upon the mercy of the Syrian army; for whether they ventured into the city or stayed without, they had no hope of escaping the fearful death of starvation. They rose early in the twilight, and crept to the Syrian camp. When they came close up to it, they were astonished to find that it

was deserted. The vast host of Syria had fled, alarmed by a sudden panic; for they believed that they were about to be attacked by the united troops of Canaan and Egypt, with whom they supposed the Israelites had made an alliance. They had fled, but they had left behind them all their wealth — their flocks and herds, and their tents filled with vessels of silver and gold, and with those numberless objects usually accompanying so large and so splendid an army. The lepers entered one tent and then another, feasted upon the food and wine, and commenced hiding for themselves the valuable articles which they found in abundance. But partly prudence and partly pity made them think of their starving brethren in Samaria, and they hastened back to the gates, where they made a report of all they had seen to the soldiers who kept the watch. The king's household was aroused; the king himself heard the strange tale distrustfully, for he argued that it must be a snare of the Syrians to tempt the hungry people out of their city to the rich provisions of the camp, and then to seize them and their town as an easy prey. He sent out some of his servants upon the few horses that were left to him, and bid them examine the ground carefully. The flight of the Syrians proved true, and the way which they had taken was strewn with heavy vessels and with garments, which they had thrown from them in their haste. Then the whole town rushed forth joyously, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians, and plenty and ease were suddenly restored, so that the words of Elisha were literally fulfilled. But Jehoram's charioteer who had mocked the prophecy, stood in the gate and was trodden to death by the people.

Before the beginning of the famine, Elisha had advised the Shunamite woman who had so hospitably received him, and whose son he had restored to life, to leave Samaria with her household, and to take up her abode in some other place until the return of better times. She had followed his advice,

and had gone to dwell in the land of the Philistines. When she came back after seven years, she learnt with dismay, that her house and her fields had in her absence been seized by the king's officers. She went to the king to lay before him her complaint. Jehoram was then just speaking with Gehazi, who was relating to him all the miraculous deeds of his master, and especially how he had saved the Shunamite's son. Thus she arrived opportunely, and the king at once ordered that all her property should be given back to her, together with the value of the produce of her lands from the time of her departure.

Elisha did not confine his prophecies to his own people, but we hear of him in the land of Syria, in the city of Damascus, where the king Benhadad lay ill. The monarch, informed of the prophet's presence, commanded Hazael, one of his officers, to take large presents, and to go to Elisha to enquire of him, whether he would recover from his disease. With a train of forty laden camels, Hazael came to Elisha and gave his master's message. The prophet answered firmly, "Go say to him, Thou wilt certainly recover: yet the Lord has shown me that he shall surely die." Having uttered these strange words he wept. "Why weeps my lord?" asked Hazael surprised. "Because I know the evil that thou wilt do to the children of Israel," answered Elisha; "their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children to pieces." Hazael cunningly asked in apparent amazement, "But what is thy servant, a dog, that he should do these great things?" Then Elisha answered, "The Lord has shown me that thou shalt be king of Syria." Hazael returned to his master, told him that he would surely recover, and suffocated him the next day with a wet cloth. The murderer then seized the crown and became king of Syria.

122. JEHU MADE KING OVER ISRAEL.

[2 Kings IX.]

Hazael at once commenced warfare both against Judah and Israel. He advanced to besiege Ramoth in Gilead. The two kings Ahaziah and Jehoram had united their forces to oppose the invader; but Jehoram was wounded during the siege, and was compelled to return to Jezreel, leaving the leadership of the war in the hands of his generals. Among these captains was a valiant and impetuous man of the name of Jehu, celebrated for his swift and furious driving, and to him the prophet Elisha sent one of his disciples with important tidings. When the messenger arrived in Ramoth, the captains of the Hebrew host were all seated together in the camp; he appeared suddenly among them and said, "I have an errand to thee, O captain!" Jehu asked, "To which of all of us?" And he said, "To thee, O captain." Then the two retired to a secluded place, and the young prophet drawing a vial of sacred oil from his girdle, poured it over the head of the warrior, proclaiming him in the name of the Lord king over Israel, and commanding him to smite the entire house of Ahab, in order to avenge the prophets of the Lord who had been so cruelly murdered.

Having said these words, the messenger hastened away as mysteriously as he had come. But Jehu, re-entering the assembly of the captains, told them that he had been anointed king over Israel. The announcement was joyously received; the generals took off their mantles, and placing them under the feet of Jehu, in token of submission, proclaimed by the blast of the trumpet the accession of the new king. Jehu was a crafty as well as a bold man; he knew that he could hold the army in subjection, but that it might be more difficult to assure himself of the loyalty of the cities; so he bade no one leave Ramoth Gilead to carry the news to

Jezreel. But he himself sprang into his chariot, and drove off at a wild pace towards the royal residence, whither Ahaziah, the king of Judah had just gone to see the sick king. A watchman on the tower saw from afar the fleet horses approaching and gave the alarm. A messsenger was dispatched to meet the charioteer; as he approached, he said, "Thus says the king, Is it peace?" But Jehu never paused on his way, and cried out, "What hast thou to do with peace? turn thou behind me!" Soon afterwards a second messenger was sent with the same question, and he received the same answer, Jehu advancing all the while upon Jezreel. As he came near the walls of the city, the watchman recognised him, and exclaimed, "The driving is like the driving of Jehû, the son of Nimshi, for he drives furiously." The two kings of Israel and Judah, mounting their chariots, went out of the city, to oppose the audacious Jehu; they met in the notorious vineyard of Naboth. "Is it peace, Jehu?" asked Jehoram. Jehu answered, "What peace, so long as the iniquities of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" Jehoram fled alarmed, exclaiming, "There is treachery, O Ahaziah!" But Jehu, quick and resolute, drew his mighty bow, and as he saw the king turn to flee, he shot an arrow that pierced his heart, so that Jehoram sank down dead in his chariot. "Take him up, and cast him into the field of Naboth!" Jehu sternly commanded, and then started off in pursuit of Ahaziah. This unfortunate monarch was also slain in his flight, but his body was carried to Jerusalem by his servants and there buried.

Then Jehu entered the city of Jezreel, and his chariot drove under the windows of queen Jezebel's palace. She had heard of his approach, and in her own manner had made preparations to receive him. With painted face and gaily decked head she looked forth from the window and called out to Jehu, "Had Zimri peace who slew his master?" Then he

lifted up his face and saw the aged queen, and he exclaimed, "Who is on my side, who?" Three of her servants, anxious to gain the conqueror's favour, appeared at the window. "Throw her down!" cried Jehu. The order was instantly obeyed, Jezebel was dashed out of the window, and her blood was spilt upon the wall, and upon the horses as they trampled her under their hoofs. There Jehu left her, as he went triumphantly into the city to a banquet which had been prepared for him by the citizens to inaugurate his new rank. In the midst of this feast, he bethought himself of Jezebel, and sent out some men to bury her, "for she was a king's daughter." But it was too late; the hungry dogs had devoured the body of the queen, and there was nothing left of her but her skull and her feet and the palms of her hands. When the men returned and reported to Jehu what they had seen, he said, "This is the word of the Lord which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel, and the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel, so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel."

123. JEHU (884—856).

[2 Kings X.]

Jehu was determined to keep the throne by cunning, and to prevent all open rebellion. Acting in this spirit, he sent a message to all the chiefs and elders of Samaria, and invited them to choose the best and ablest of Ahab's sons to succeed his father as king over Israel. But the rulers feared the astute and audacious usurper. "Behold," they said, "two kings did not stand before him, how then shall we stand?" So they gave their complete allegiance to Jehu. The latter demanded a terrible proof of their sincerity: he bid them

slay at once Ahab's seventy sons, and bring their heads to him to Jezreel. The command was obeyed, and the bleeding heads were placed in two ghastly heaps before the gate of the city. In the morning, Jehu went to the gate, and exclaimed before all the people, "You are righteous; behold, I conspired against my master and slew him, but who slew all these?" This was a signal for a general massacre of the house of Ahab, and of all his officers and friends.

After this scene of bloodshed, Jehu left Jezreel and went to Samaria. At the shearing house on the way, he met the brothers of Ahaziah, king of Judah, and he asked them, "Who are you?" upon which they replied, "We are the brothers of Ahaziah, and we go down to salute the children of the king and the queen." Jehu exclaimed, "Take them alive!" and with unsparing cruelty ordered them all, forty-two men, to be slain at the pit of the shearing house. As he approached the city, he met Jehonadab the son of Rechab, whom he knew to be friendly, and he called out to him from his chariot, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" And Jehonadab answered, "It is." Then Jehu gave him his hand and let him come up beside him into his chariot, and said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord." Burning with this zeal, the new king slew every one of the family of Ahab that was left in Samaria.

Now the ancient dynasty was destroyed, but the priests of Baal were still ministering and holding their sway in the land, and Jehu considered that his power was not secure until he had subdued those powerful enemies. Resolving upon their complete destruction, he had again recourse to a stratagem. He called an assembly of the people and said to them, "Ahab served Baal a little, but Jehu shall serve him much." Then he proclaimed a solemn and general festival to be held in honour of Baal, and commanded all the prophets and priests of the god to appear, until the vast

temple was completely filled. He bade all of them array themselves in their costliest garments, as if he wished to show singular reverence to their god. Only idolators were admitted; all who acknowledged the one true God of Israel were carefully excluded. The sacrifices were offered up with unwonted solemnity, and the priests were pouring forth their prayers, when suddenly they beheld eighty armed men enter, who burst in upon the terrified assembly. Priests and worshippers fell by the swords of the fierce warriors. All were slain, the images of the idol were broken, and the temple burnt and razed to the ground.

Jehu was now securely placed upon the throne of Israel, the founder of a new dynasty. But he did not preserve purity of worship; for, though implacable against the followers of Baal, he permitted the idolatry of the golden calves to continue in Dan and Bethel, and thus followed in the footsteps of the wicked Jeroboam.

In his reign, moreover, the empire of Israel began to be considerably weakened. Hazael, king of Syria, made successful invasions into the eastern districts of Gilead, and subjected to his dominion the territories of Gad, Reuben, and half Manasseh, fine pasture lands, rich in far-famed cattle. Jehu was unable to recover these valuable possessions; luxury and despotism seem to have destroyed his energy and vigour. He died after a reign of twenty-eight years, and was buried in Samaria. He was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz.

124. JEHOAHAZ (856—840).

[2 Kings XIII. 1—9.]

During this unfortunate reign, the Israelites suffered severely from the perpetual attacks of the Syrians. Hazael and his son Benhadad marched victoriously into the northern

provinces, made raids upon the country, oppressed the people, and levied heavy imposts. By these constant wars the splendid army of the Israelites melted down to ten thousand footmen, fifty horsemen, and ten chariots. In the midst of their misery and oppression, the Lord sent them help through a hero whose name is not mentioned in the Bible, and they enjoyed a short respite of peace.

But king and subjects were sunk in idolatry, their moral strength was waning, and they could barely maintain their independence.

When Jehoahaz died, he was buried in Samaria, and was succeeded by his son Joash.

125. JOASH (840—825).

[2 Kings XIII. 10—25.]

The Moabites and the Syrians recommenced their attacks upon the kingdom of Israel; but Joash, more courageous than his father, determined upon a valiant resistance. It was during this reign that the aged prophet Elisha fell dangerously ill. The young king came to visit him, and feeling how soon he was to lose his wise and patriotic counsellor, he wept bitterly, exclaiming, "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" Elisha bid Joash take his bow to the open window and shoot an arrow eastward into the air. He himself guided the hands of the king, and exclaimed, "An arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and an arrow of deliverance from Syria; for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou hast consumed them." Then he bid the king take the arrows and strike the ground with them. Joash struck the ground three times; then the prophet said to him angrily, "Thou shouldst have struck five or six times, then hadst thou smitten Syria until thou hadst consumed it, whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice."

Elisha died soon afterwards, and he was buried by his loving disciples, probably in the outskirts of Samaria, and was mourned by all Israel. His memory remained dear to the people, and was faithfully handed down from generation to generation. A wonderful power of healing and restoring was attributed even to his sepulchre; for about a year after his death, when some Israelites, engaged in burying one of their kinsmen, were suddenly surprised by a band of Moabites, and in the haste and alarm of the moment cast the body into the grave of the prophet, "the man as soon as he touched the bones of Elisha, revived and stood upon his feet." Elisha was indeed looked upon as the good and healing prophet, as the gentle and benevolent messenger of God. If it be remembered how he sweetened the bitter waters and multiplied the widow's cruse of oil, recompensed the Shunamite and restored her child to life, fed the starving prophets and assisted them in all their wants; how diligently he watched over Israel's welfare, and extended his benefits also to the heathens; it is easy to understand why the king called him "the chariot and horsemen of Israel," and why his death was felt as an irreparable misfortune.

Elisha's predictions with respect to the Syrians were realised. Joash recovered the eastern cities which his father had lost, and defeated the Syrians in three battles. Provoked to warfare by Amaziah, king of Judah, Joash next turned his arms against the southern kingdom. He was again successful, gaining at Beth-shemesh a complete victory over Amaziah, who fell into his hands. He then marched on Jerusalem, broke down the walls of the city, and entered in triumph. He impiously plundered the Temple of all its gold and silver vessels, seized the treasures of the king's palace, and returned to Samaria with a large number of hostages.

He died in his own city and was succeeded by his son.

126. JEROBOAM II. (825—784).

[2 Kings XIV. 23—29; Amos, Hosea.]

Although Jeroboam obstinately preserved the idolatrous worship of his predecessor, he proved a great and remarkable ruler. He restored his kingdom to much of its former proportions, for he reconquered all the land from the northern district of Hamath southward to the Dead Sea, and took Damascus, the flourishing capital of the Syrians. The Moabites, who had been plundering the kingdom during the preceding reigns, were kept in subjection, and compelled to pay their tribute of flocks and herds.

It was during the reign of the second Jeroboam that the prophet Jonah lived, who is in our minds so intimately associated with the history of Nineveh. At the same time wrote the prophet Amos, the herdsman of Tekoah, who gives us a vivid picture of that age of corruption — of the cruel and selfish oppression of the kings, of the reckless iniquity of the priests, of the wanton lawlessness and the vices of the people. "Thus says the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes; they pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and pervert the cause of the lowly: and a man and his father will go in to the same house, to profane My name. And they lay themselves down upon pledged clothes by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their God." Then the prophet announced the terrible retribution that awaited the people for so much wickedness. "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their masters, Bring and let us drink. The Lord God swears by His holiness that, behold, the days shall come upon you, that

you will be taken away with hooks and your posterity with fishhooks. And you shall go out at the ruins, every one his own way; and you shall cast yourselves into the mountain, says the Lord." And rising to greater distinctness, and menacing the king himself, he exclaimed: "Thus He showed me; and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in His hands. And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of My people Israel, I will no longer pass it over, and the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." The boldness of these and similar speeches drew upon Amos the persecution of the king and his officers. Amaziah especially, a priest in Bethel, sent word to the king: "Amos has conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos says, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land." Amos was ordered at once to leave the kingdom of Israel and to go to Judah. But he answered, "I am no prophet, nor am I a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit; and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, Go, prophesy to My people Israel. — Now, therefore, hear thou the word of the Lord: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and speak not against the house of Isaac. Therefore thus says the Lord, Thy wife shall be dishonoured in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line, and thou shalt die in an unclean land, and Israel shall surely go into captivity out of this land."

No less stern were the warnings and rebukes of the prophet Hosea, who raised his voice about the same period;

however different from Amos in style and manner, he closely resembles him in describing the degeneracy of the time, and in predicting terrible misfortunes. "Hear ye the word of the Lord," he exclaimed, "ye children of Israel: for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land — swearing and lying and killing and stealing and committing adultery — they break out in violence, and blood follows upon blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and everyone in it shall perish."

But Jeroboam did not see the fearful day of retribution foretold by the prophets. He died in peace in the year 784.

127. INTERREGNUM; ZACHARIAH; SHALLUM; MENAHEM; PEKAHIAH (784—759).

[2 Kings XV. 8—26.]

Jeroboam's death was the signal for general confusion and anarchy. As the prophet Hosea said, "they had sown the wind and reaped the whirlwind." For ten years this Interregnum distracted the land (784—774), when at last Zachariah, the son of Jeroboam, was placed on the throne. He was also an idolator, and was, with the approval of the people, murdered by Shallum, the son of Jabesh, after a short reign of six months; and thus ended the dynasty of the house of Jehu.

Shallum, who was proclaimed king, reigned but one month, and was slain in his turn by Menahem, the son of Gadi, who came up from Tirzah, and seized the throne of Israel, which he occupied for ten years (773—763).

Menahem was barbarously cruel, and wreaked fearful vengeance upon the cities that would not at once acknowledge his sovereignty. He maintained the worship of the golden calves in Bethel and Dan. But Pul, the great

Assyrian conqueror, invaded his kingdom; Menahem, anxious solely for his own safety, secured a truce and the invader's support against his Hebrew subjects by paying the enormous tribute of 1000 talents of silver which he obtained by imposing upon each person of the wealthier class an impost of 50 shekels. Then Pul left the land.

Menahem was succeeded by his son Pekahiah (763—759). After a short and evil reign, during which the whole kingdom seems to have been convulsed by crime and bloodshed, Pekahiah was slain in his own palace by Pekah, the son of Remaliah, one of the captains of his army, who attacked him at the head of a band of 50 conspirators from Gilead, and who succeeded him on the throne.

128. PEKAH (759—739).

[2 Kings XV. 27—31.]

Pekah made an alliance with Rezin, king of Syria, and both invaded together the empire of Judah, over which Ahaz was then reigning. At that time, Isaiah had already commenced his grand prophetic career, and played an important part in all public matters. He mentions the war and its issue in the following words: "And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim; and his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. Then said the Lord to Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field, and say to him, Take heed and be quiet; fear not,

neither be fainthearted on account of the two tails of these smoking firebrands, the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and the son of Remaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal. Thus says the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be no more a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son — if you will not believe, surely you shall not be established." And as the prophet had described and foretold, so it happened. Ahaz called in the aid of the Assyrians and their valiant king Tiglath-Pilesar, who eagerly seized this opportunity for obtaining a footing in Palestine. They descended upon the east-jordanic provinces and upon the northern districts of the kingdom of Israel, invading Gilead, Galilee, and Naphtali, carrying the people away as captives into the heart of Assyria, and transplanting Assyrians into those newly acquired territories. Thus Israel was materially weakened, and was ripe to fall a prey to any foreign conqueror. Hoshea, the son of Elah, headed a conspiracy against Pekah, slew him, and then seized the crown. He was the last king of Israel.

129. HOSHEA (739—722).

[2 Kings XVII.]

Ushered in by revolt and violence, this reign was one of disgrace and misfortune — a fearful termination of centuries of wickedness, bloodshed, and idolatry. Shalmaneser had followed Tiglath-Pilesar as king of Assyria, and had

inherited his love of conquest and daring ambition. He subdued a part of Phoenicia, and made the king of Israel tributary to Assur. Hoshea tried to shake off the burdensome yoke; to effect this, he secretly sought the powerful help of So or Sevechus, king of Egypt; and then he refused to transmit to Assyria the imposed tax. By these steps he speedily brought final ruin upon his country. Shalmaneser with his immense host poured in upon the weak and exhausted kingdom of Israel; he seized and imprisoned Hoshea, and besieged the last stronghold and the pride of the land, the beautiful city of Samaria. After three years of horrible suffering on the part of the besieged, Samaria fell into the hand of the enemy. The Israelites were carried away into the remote provinces of Mesopotamia and Media, while Assyrians were sent to colonise the fair kingdom of the north. With an instinctive fear of the great God of the Hebrews, these Assyrian settlers tried to add His worship to their own religious practices, so that the land soon became the scene of the strangest idolatry.

Thus the kingdom of the ten tribes was for ever overthrown. "And this happened," says the Bible, "because the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and had feared other gods; and walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel; and on account of the kings of Israel they had chosen. And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchman to the fenced city. And they set up images and groves in every high hill and under every garden tree; and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away

before them; and they wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger.... Yet the Lord testified against Israel and against Judah by all the prophets and by all the seers, saying, Turn you from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the laws which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God..... And they made for themselves molten images, two calves, and made Ashtartes, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal; and they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divinations and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger."

The Israelites were almost without exception ruled by weak or sinful kings; the gloom of their history is rarely relieved by a ray of prosperity or hope; yet their ultimate fate of being entirely merged in the race of their hated conquerors is full of a melancholy and touching interest. For the ten tribes of Israel were not even permitted, like the sister kingdom of Judah, to bequeath to later ages and western nations the memory of rich and varied destinies. They were irretrievably lost, and a deep and impenetrable silence clings round their dispersion. The thick folds of the veil have never been lifted; the words of the prophet are verified:

"The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise; she is forsaken upon her land, there is none to raise her up."

XI. THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

(975—588.)

130. REHOBOAM (975—958).

[1 Kings XIV. 21—31; 2 Chron. X—XII.]

It is necessary now to retrace our steps to the time of the disruption of the Hebrew monarchy, when Rehoboam, the son of king Solomon, after vainly trying to defeat Jeroboam, and to win back the rebellious tribes, retired to his own magnificent capital Jerusalem. He felt that he must content himself with the rule of the two faithful provinces of Judah and Benjamin, which were gradually amalgamated under the name of the kingdom of Judah.

In extent, fertility, and variety of resources, the northern empire far outshone the rival kingdom; whilst the latter, as has above been pointed out, possessed the far-famed city of Jerusalem, and the sacred Temple hallowed by the Ark and the tablets of the Law. There could be no second Jerusalem, as there could be no second Temple. The chivalry and valour of David, the unsurpassed wisdom of Solomon, and the power and splendour of both, seemed inseparably associated with the holy city. Cherished memories of early days clung fresh and unfading round the bleak and barren hill country of Judah, dear to all its inhabitants as the cradle

of their glorious heroes. The little kingdom was hemmed in between the Mediterranean and the desert. Ephraim and Dan were its northern confines, the wild tribes of Edom and Arabia, of Amalek and Moab, roamed along its southern frontier; while the Ammonites and the Edomites remained tributary to its sway.

Rehoboam was unable to understand the pure faith of his ancestors; weak and sinful, he was easily tempted into idolatry, in which he was perhaps confirmed by his mother, who was of Ammonite descent. Heathen worship flourished in many groves and on a thousand heights consecrated to idols throughout the land. As usual, political decline was the consequence of religious degeneracy. In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, Shishak, king of Egypt, invaded Judea, and marched upon Jerusalem. He entered the holy city, penetrated unopposed into the royal palace and into the very precincts of the Temple, ransacked the treasures of both, and seized even the golden shields which since Solomon's time had adorned the porch of the Sanctuary. Laden with booty, Shishak returned to Egypt. Rehoboam, to lessen the humiliation, replaced the golden shields by brazen ones. Moreover, continual warfare was carried on throughout his reign between Judah and Israel; but he gained no decisive advantages; whilst the northern empire increased in strength, in unity, and in order.

Rehoboam was succeeded by his son Abijah, the child of his favourite wife Maachah, a daughter of Absalom.

131. ABIJAH (958—955).

[1 Kings XV. 1—8; 2 Chron. XIII.]

This short reign was distinguished by no memorable event. Abijah was an idolator like his father, and like him, he waged war against Jeroboam, and with equally indifferent results. He was succeeded by his son.

132. ASA (955—914).

[1 Kings XV. 9—24; 2 Chron. XIV—XVI.]

This king, pious and godfearing, was earnestly intent upon restoring the pure religion of the Hebrews. He not only broke the images of idols, and expelled the heathen priests from the land, but he even banished his mother Maachah from the royal palace, because she obstinately clung to the worship of Ashtarte, and he ordered the statue of the goddess to be burnt in the valley of Kidron. But it is remarkable that he did not abolish the altars on the heights, upon which he allowed sacrifices to be offered and incense to be burnt as before: it is uncertain whether his reforming zeal did not extend so far, or whether he considered the high places as harmless and not incompatible with the service of God. He began to enrich the Temple anew, and deposited in it the treasures of gold and silver which he and his father had consecrated. The country indeed bade fair to prosper in his reign; he built new cities and fortified them with walls and towers, whilst an army of valiant spearsmen from Judah, and expert archers from Benjamin, were trained to defend the towns. The strength of his army was soon to be tested. Immense hosts of Ethiopians under their king Serah invaded Judea; but they were completely defeated by the Hebrews, who pursued them to Gerar, and gained immense spoil. After this decided success, Asa became even more anxious than before to prove his piety; he faithfully followed the teaching of the prophets who came to advise and to guide him, destroyed every idol that had been left in Judah, and restored the altar of the Lord before the porch of the Temple.

But a serious trial awaited him towards the close of his reign. Baasha, king of Israel, desirous to weaken his rival, was building the city of Ramah close upon the con-

fines of Judah, from whence he hoped to control the land. Asa, well understanding the danger, despatched messengers to Benhadad, king of Syria, sent him all the newly accumulated treasures of the Temple and the palace as presents, and entreated him to break his alliance with Israel, and to invade the northern provinces, in order to compel Baasha to retreat for the defence of his own country. Benhadad consented; he was successful, and conquered the provinces of Naphtali and some more southern districts. Baasha returned in haste to his capital Tirzah, whereupon Asa sent large numbers of workmen to pull down the scarcely completed and now deserted town Ramah; and he built with the materials the cities of Geba and Mizpah (see p. 443).

Asa spent the remainder of his reign in peace, but was in his old age afflicted by a terrible disease in his feet. When he died, he was buried by his loving people in the sepulchre which he had built for himself in Jerusalem.

His son succeeded him.

133. JEHOSHAPHAT (914—891).

[1 Kings XXII. 41—50; 2 Kings III. 7 sqq.; 2 Chron. XVII—XX.]

Jehoshaphat proved worthy of his father Asa. He may be numbered among the greatest kings of Judah. He strengthened the country by founding new cities and by fortifying those which Asa had taken from the Ephraimites. He built forts and established storehouses throughout the land. Except that he maintained the service on the high places, he insisted upon the pure worship of the Lord, and rooted out the last vestiges of idolatry. So zealous was he in the propagation of the true doctrines, that he appointed men in all the cities of Judah to instruct the people in the Law. The fame of his power and his wisdom was widely spread among the tribes of the East; the old magnificent days of

Solomon seemed to be revived; the Philistines and the Arabians sought to secure the goodwill of the monarch by costly presents and by tribute money; and the Edomites gave proof of their faithful allegiance. A greater triumph even than all this was the alliance which he concluded with king Ahab, and which for a while terminated the fierce warfare that had so long raged between Judah and Israel. That union was strengthened by the marriage of his son Joram, the heir of Judah, with Athaliah, the Israelite princess. Jehoshaphat himself went up to Samaria, the capital of Ephraim, on a peaceful visit to Ahab. There the two kings resolved upon the campaign against the Syrian king Benhadad which, at the siege of Ramoth in Gilead, ended in the death of Ahab and the defeat of the Israelite army (see p. 454). Jehoshaphat was, however, permitted to return in safety to Jerusalem, where he continued to devote himself to religious and political reforms. But a fearful calamity threatened the land of Judah. The Moabites and the Ammonites, those ungovernable tribes whose ardour for warfare and rapine had never abated, attempted the conquest of the southern kingdom. At the first tidings of this impending invasion, Jehoshaphat was seized with consternation. He proclaimed — so relates the Chronist — a fast throughout the whole land, and summoned the people to the Court of the Temple to implore the help of the Lord. The king himself prayed fervently for aid and counsel in a manner worthy of his great ancestor Solomon. With the humility of true greatness, he said, "We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon Thee." A vast concourse of people was gathered round him, men, women, and children, all waiting for a sign from the Lord. The prayer was answered. Upon Jehaziel, a Levite, descended the spirit of God. "Be not afraid nor dismayed," said he, "by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but

God's;... you shall not need to fight in this battle: come forward, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you." King and people heard these comforting words with gladness and pious faith. On the following morning, when the warriors poured forth from Jerusalem, the priests, arrayed in their splendid robes, sang, "Praise ye the Lord, for His mercy endureth for ever." The Ammonites and the Moabites were smitten — but not by the army of Jehoshaphat. They had been joined by inhabitants of Seir, upon whom, however, it appears they looked with mistrust and suspicion; and an internecine feud followed, by which the armies of the three tribes were thoroughly weakened and almost annihilated. When Jehoshaphat and his soldiers came to the battlefield, they saw it strewn with the corpses of their enemies, and they returned to Israel laden with spoil. The king gave utterance to his feelings of joy and gratitude in fervent hymns of praise.

Towards the close of his reign, he made an alliance with Ahaziah, the wicked king of Israel, for the purpose of resuming that commerce in gold which had flourished in the days of Solomon. Accordingly he built large ships which were to sail to Ophir. But the vessels never went out on their voyages; they were wrecked in the harbour of Ezion-geber on the Red Sea. When Jehoshaphat died, his son succeeded him.

134. JORAM (891—884).

[2 Kings VIII. 16—24; 2 Chron. XXI.]

This reign was unfortunate for Judah. As soon as Joram considered himself secured in his succession, he killed his six brothers, whom their father had amply provided for with gold and lands, and slew, besides, many persons of in-

fluence whose ambition he feared. He had married Athaliah, the daughter of the wicked and revengeful Jezebel. Like her mother, Athaliah was a fanatic idolatress and worshipper of Baal; she brought her images and her priests with her into the city of Jerusalem, and succeeded too well in gaining the fickle people to her side. Thus lawlessness and superstition were rampant throughout the land. The proud and warlike Edomites, who had long watched for an opportunity to shake off the hated bondage, now revolted from a rule of combined weakness and crime; they proclaimed their independence, and elected a king from among their own people — thus realising the prediction contained in Isaac's blessing:

"And by thy sword shalt thou live,
Yet shalt thou serve thy brother: —
But when thou truly desirest it,
Thou shalt break his yoke from thy neck."

Probably encouraged by the success of this rebellion, the Philistines and the Arabians took up arms against Judah; they advanced unopposed through the southern districts of the kingdom; and reaching Jerusalem, they broke into the palace, plundered it of its treasures, and carried away Joram's wives and children, leaving behind only his youngest son Ahaziah. Even some towns of Judea herself, as Libnah, succeeded in withdrawing from the king's feeble government. Joram died of a fearful illness, and was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the royal sepulchre, and without the funeral honours that the people had accorded to his father.

135. AHAZIAH AND INTERREGNUM (884—877).

[2 Kings VIII. 24 IX. 29; 2 Chr. XXII. 9 - XXIII. 21.]

Ahaziah, the youngest son of Joram and the only one who had escaped captivity, and who now succeeded him

upon the throne, was entirely swayed by his mother Athaliah, who was the evil genius of his reign, and who in every way fostered the growth of idolatry.

Ahaziah allied himself with his uncle Jehoram, the king of Israel, in the warfare which he carried on at Ramoth Gilead against Hazael, king of Syria. Wounded during the siege, he left the camp and repaired to Jezreel, where he was joined by Jehoram. From that capital the two kings witnessed the approach of the impetuous Jehu, who had by Elisha been anointed king of Israel (p. 476): Jehoram who set out to meet Jehu, was pierced by him with an arrow; Ahaziah at the first panic fled northwards and hid himself in the neighbouring country, but he was overtaken at Megiddo and brought before Jehu, who mercilessly ordered him to be killed, yet allowed his body to be taken to Jerusalem, where he was buried in the grave of his ancestors.

In her royal palace, Athaliah heard the tidings of her son's murder; goaded on by frenzy and vindictiveness, she resolved to exterminate all the members of the reigning house of Judah, and almost succeeded in her mad and nefarious design; indeed she believed that she had succeeded completely. She now ruled supreme over the southern kingdom, which sighed under the yoke of her relentless tyranny.

But the royal line of David was not extinct: one feeble child of Ahaziah, Joash, then only a year old, had been saved from the general massacre by the care and vigilance of his aunt Jehosheba, a sister of the king, and wife of the High-priest Jehoiada. For six years Joash was kept hidden in the house of his anxious relatives. In the beginning of the seventh year, the High-priest determined to wrest the throne by a bold stroke from the heathen queen, and to secure it for the young scion of Judah. It was a daring, but by no means a hopeless scheme. In spite of the great

progress which idolatry had made during the preceding reigns, and of the very large number of priests and prophets of Baal who infested Jerusalem, there were still many of the people who remained true to the pure worship of the one God, and who longed to avenge the blood of the house of David. In the same city stood the Temple of the Lord and the house of Baal; in the one Jehoiada sacrificed and prayed, in the other the priest Mattan invoked the images of his deities. Athaliah had not attempted to forbid the worship of the Lord; indeed she found she could not destroy the authority of the Temple; and thus it became possible for the conspiracy, planned in secrecy and with prudence, to be carried out. The Levites were, by request of Jehoiada, assembled in Jerusalem from all parts of Judah; to those servants of the Lord was added an army of warriors whose loyalty and obedience could be relied upon. On a Sabbath morning, as if to celebrate the usual worship, a vast congregation might have been seen pouring into the Temple. This concourse of people was divided into separate bands; one portion guarded the doors of the holy place, another kept watch at the outer gates, a third was stationed round the porch of the palace, whilst a number of armed Levites formed the bodyguard of the young Joash. The commanders and captains were armed with the shields and spears of king David. When all was ready and well prepared, Jehoiada brought the child into the Temple, placed the royal crown upon his head, and handed over to him the laws of the empire. He was instantly greeted with the cry of "God save the king!" That cry was taken up by the guards stationed at the gates, and ringing forth through the air, it startled and amazed the unsuspecting queen. She boldly hastened forth from her palace, and looking into the Court of the Temple, beheld the crowned child standing on the elevated place reserved for the king,

and surrounded by an enthusiastic multitude shouting forth their vows of allegiance with the blasts of the trumpets. Then she felt that the day of retribution had come; she rent her clothes, exclaiming, "Treason! treason!" She might have fallen a victim to the popular fury, had not Jehoiada, fearful of sacrilege in the Temple, exclaimed, "Take her away beyond the lines, and whoso follows her, let him be slain by the sword — slay her not in the House of the Lord!" The warriors drew her forth from the Temple, and hurried her along between the hosts of armed men, till they came to the gates of the palace, where they slew her — the last remnant of the wicked house of Omri. Then the people rushed upon the temple of Baal, tore down the altars, broke the idols, and killed the chief priest Mattan. And now Jehoiada, no less distinguished by wisdom than patriotism, solemnly concluded a double covenant — on the one hand between God and the people of Judah "that it might be the people of the Lord," and on the other hand, between the king and the people; by the one he secured a theocratic, by the other a constitutional rule; and he thus established institutions fitted both for a holy and a free nation. Then Joash proceeded to mount Zion, and entered the palace of his royal ancestors.

136. JOASH (877—838).

[2 Kings XI. XII; 2 Chron. XXIV.]

Being a mere child only seven years old when he came to the throne, Joash remained for many years longer under the guidance of the High-priest Jehoiada, who instructed and advised him, and firmly implanted in his mind the truths of the Mosaic faith. Yet though all other forms of strange worship were abolished, the service on the high places, which had evidently taken deep root, was carried on as before. The king's special care was directed towards the

maintenance of the Temple and its service. The holy edifice had during the last two unhappy reigns fallen into sad decay; its very walls were seriously injured by neglect, and it was despoiled of its gold and silver vessels, which had either been seized by foreign invaders, or been paid to them as tribute money. Joash ordered a large chest to be placed on the right side of the brazen altar, into which the people were invited to put their offerings. This appeal was responded to with enthusiasm; the chest was soon filled with money; and the workmen commenced their labour, and carried it on with vigour. New vessels and implements of gold and silver were made, and once more the Temple was restored to its former magnificence.

Jehoiada the High-priest died a hundred and thirty years old, and Joash was left without a faithful friend and counsellor. This proved a great misfortune to the country; for the king, weak and easily led, listened to the seductive advice of the young nobles of Judah, and abandoned the pure worship of God for the service of Baal. Prophets arose who warned and threatened, but their words were unheeded; both king and people defied the punishment which they knew must inevitably follow upon their idolatry. Prominent among the prophetic monitors was Zachariah, the son of Jehoiada; again and again he raised his voice to denounce the idolators; he stood boldly before the people in the Temple, and exclaimed: "Thus says God, Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He has also forsaken you." The people, enraged at this reproof, and still more instigated by the ungrateful king himself, stoned the prophet to death in the gates of the Temple, and desecrated the holy place by wanton bloodshed. Zachariah exclaimed with his dying breath, "The Lord will look upon it and requite it!"

At the end of that same year the retribution came. Hazael, king of Syria, invaded Canaan; he advanced unopposed as far as Gath and took it; he next marched with a comparatively small army into Judea, where he killed many of the nobles and chiefs of the people; then he turned to Jerusalem, and was about to enter the town, when Joash, anxious to induce him to retreat, sent him an immense tribute of gold and silver taken from the Temple and the palace. The unhappy king fell dangerously ill; and while tortured by pain and remorse, he was cruelly murdered by his own servants Josabar and Josabad. He was buried in the city of Jerusalem, but not in the royal sepulchre; and he was succeeded by his son.

137. AMAZIAH (838—811).

[2 Kings XIV. 1—20; 2 Chron. XXV.]

Amaziah's first care was to strengthen his position, for he was well aware that he would have to encounter the hostility of all the friends of his father's assassins. When he felt his authority sufficiently established, impelled by justice and filial duty, he slew the wicked murderers, but "the children of the murderers he slew not; according to that which is written in the book of the Law of Moses, wherein the Lord commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin."

The Edomites had since Joram's time maintained their independence. Amaziah, desirous to weaken, and if possible to reconquer them, undertook an expedition into their territory; he defeated them in a great battle, killed 10,000 of their men, advanced to their capital Sela, and took it, after which he changed its name into Joktheel. Elated by this decided victory, he aspired to the greater glory of subduing the kingdom of Israel. He despatched a messenger to Joash

with the defiant words, "Come, let us look one another in the face!" The king of Israel returned this proud, allegorical reply, "The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife; and there ran along the wild beasts that are in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle. Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, therefore thy heart is lifted up; enjoy the glory of this, and remain at home: for why shouldst thou interfere to thy misfortune, that thou shouldst fall, even thou and Judah with thee?" But Amaziah would not listen. So the two kings met in battle at Beth-shemesh, a city of Judah. Amaziah was defeated and his army routed; then Joash advanced upon Jerusalem, the walls of which he destroyed to a considerable extent. The capital was plundered by the victorious king, who returned to Samaria rich with spoil, and taking with him many hostages. During the later years of his reign, Amaziah abandoned the worship of God and turned to idolatry. The priests, incensed at this desertion, made a conspiracy against his life. He was informed of the danger, and escaped to Lachish; but he was pursued, seized, and mercilessly slain. His body was brought to Jerusalem and interred in the tomb of his ancestors. He was succeeded by his son.

138. UZZIAH OR AZARIAH (811—759).

[2 Kings XIV. 21, 22; XV. 1—7; 2 Chron. XXVI.]

Uzziah was sixteen years old when he commenced his long and happy reign. Later historians, as the Chronist, dwell upon it with pride and delight. The young king, following the guidance of the prophets, was a true and faithful worshipper of the Lord, who sent him blessings and prosperity. He trained a magnificent army chosen from the very flower of his people, and supplied them with new weapons

and complete armour. Eager to test and to establish their strength, he undertook a campaign against the old enemies of his people, the Philistines. He subdued them, breaking down the walls of their chief towns Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod, and building new cities in their land. Then he turned his forces against the Arabians, whom he also defeated and weakened. Alarmed by these victories, the Ammonites sought his friendship by presents. His fame spread widely among the surrounding nations, and reached the king of Egypt. Constantly intent upon improvement and progress, Uzziah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, and fortified them with new towers. He raised forts in the desert, in order to secure a permanent command of the neighbouring countries. He even constructed and placed upon the towers of the bulwarks great engines, which by some machinery, rude enough it may be, but still remarkable for that time, could send a cloud of arrows and large stones down upon the enemy beneath. The peaceful arts of husbandry were not forgotten among the pursuits of war. The king loved agriculture and encouraged it by every means in his power. He had vine-dressers in the mountains of Carmel; his vast flocks and herds grazed upon the rich pastures of the low countries; and for the use of his herdsmen he sank many wells. For the protection of commerce, he built or improved the harbour of Elath on the Red Sea, which offered greater safety than that of Eziongeber. Many prophets shed lustre upon his time; men like Joel, Hosea, and Amos raised their voices in warning and counsel; it was then that the great Isaiah began his noble career of public instructor; and Micah followed in his footsteps. Thus Uzziah's reign passed gloriously for himself and prosperously for the people, until at last, in a moment of self-glorification and pride, he determined to offer up incense with his own hand on the golden altar of the Temple. As he entered the holy building, he

was followed by Azariah the High-priest and many priests. They knew that his purpose was sinful, and they warned him that he could not with impunity usurp the office reserved for the anointed sons of Aaron. But their remonstrances were unheeded; Uzziah seized the censer, and was about to burn the incense, when suddenly he was afflicted by that most terrible of all scourges, leprosy. The fatal marks were imprinted on his forehead, and instantly observed by the priests. They knew that he durst not stay to pollute the House of God; he knew it himself; for he hurried out, and dwelt in seclusion, away from the palace and the city, a leper until the day of his death.

The government was at once handed over to his son Jotham, who at Uzziah's death became king of Judah.

139. JOTHAM (759—743).

[2 Kings XV. 32—38; 2 Chron. XXVII.]

Jotham was twenty-five years old, when he succeeded to the throne. Like his father, he was obedient to the Divine Law, although he likewise suffered the high places to remain, where "the people still sacrificed and burnt incense." He added another gate to the Temple, extended the wall of the hill (Ophel), and built new fortifications in the mountains and woods of Judah. He was strong enough to defeat and to subject the Ammonites, and to exact from them a heavy tribute of silver and of corn. "So Jotham became mighty, because he went the right way before the Lord his God."

Yet it is strange that during the reigns of two of the most virtuous kings of Judah, the people should have been singularly corrupt and idolatrous. Again and again the voice of the prophets was lifted up to admonish and reprove, to advise and to menace. To their writings we are indebted

for vivid pictures of the social condition of their times; from them we learn the lawless arrogance of the nobles and the heedless depravity of the people. Joel furnishes a magnificent description of a remarkable locust plague, and Amos and Micah make allusion to another terrible calamity, an earthquake, which became a marked epoch for several generations. But prominent even among so many great contemporaries stands Isaiah, unequalled in power and sublime impressiveness, the intrepid counsellor of kings and chiefs, the untiring teacher of the people, the terror of a venal and degraded priesthood, the messenger of bright hopes to the faithful and the penitent*).

Jotham was succeeded by his son.

140. AHAZ (743—728).

[2 Kings XVI; 2 Chron. XXVIII.]

Great troubles and misfortunes befell the land during the reign of this weak and idolatrous monarch. "He did not what was right in the sight of the Lord his God, like David his father; but he walked in the way of the kings of Israel; he even made his son pass through the fire, according to the abomination of the heathens, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel; and he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree." The corruption of the kingdom of Judah reached an unprecedented height. Political dangers necessarily followed. The Edomites revolted and even ventured to invade Judea; they defeated the Hebrew army and carried off many captives. The Philistines broke into the land, and succeeded in conquering some of the western districts. Pekah, the king of Israel, who had seen the rising power of Judah with envy and anxiety, made an alliance with Rezin,

*) For a full account of the life and writings of Isaiah, see vol. II.

king of Syria. Both monarchs marched against Jerusalem; but the city, strong in its splendid fortifications, withstood the siege of the united armies. Rezin, enraged at this humiliating check, marched with his troops southwards, seized the valuable harbour town of Elath, and colonised it with Syrians. To protect himself against future dangers from his northern foes, Ahaz turned for help to Tiglath-Pileser, the powerful king of Assyria, actually calling the vulture down into the fold. His messengers went to the great monarch with presents of gold and silver taken from the Temple and his own palace. Tiglath-Pileser, too happy to obtain a hold upon Canaan, obeyed the summons with alacrity; he marched upon Damascus, besieged and took it, led the people away captives to Kir, and slew Rezin, the king of Syria. Ahaz went to Damascus to meet his deliverer. There he saw and admired a heathen altar, and he determined to place one exactly like it in the Temple of the Lord. It was accurately copied, and this new altar was put eastward before the entrance to the Holy, on the spot previously occupied by the old and hallowed brazen one, which was removed to the northern side of the Court. With a strange delight in his new altar, he ordered that all the principal sacrifices should be offered upon it. Besides, he irreverently despoiled the great laver, took it down from the brazen oxen upon which it rested, and placed it on the stone pavement.

When he died, he left the empire much weakened in extent and material resources, and sadly degenerated in religion and morality.

141. HEZEKIAH (728—699).

[2 Kings XVIII—XX; 2 Chron. XXIX—XXXII.]

Fortunately for Judah, Hezekiah was in many respects well fitted to remedy the injury which the infatuation and perverseness of his father had inflicted upon the land.

Rightminded and godfearing, he abhorred all heathen practices, and determined to re-instate the pure worship of the Lord. "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did . . . He trusted in the Lord God of Israel: so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clung to the Lord, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments which the Lord commanded Moses."

He wisely gave himself up to the guidance of Isaiah, who remained faithfully at his side from the commencement until the close of his reign; and he encouraged the prophets Nahum and Micah, to teach the people and enforce upon them obedience and piety.

His first self-imposed task was to destroy not only the numerous idols which disgraced his kingdom, but also to cut down the groves and high places which had been spared and sanctioned even by his pious predecessors. With an unflinching hand he annihilated these last vestiges of a corrupt religion; he even broke in pieces and removed the brazen serpent of Moses, because this ancient and time-honoured relic of Israel's wanderings in the desert was regarded by the people with superstitious awe, and worshipped with incense and prayer. He renewed the services and offerings in the Temple with unusual splendour; he was anxious to celebrate the feast of Passover with a grandeur and magnificence that had not been known since the time of Solomon. To carry out this object, he postponed the festival for a whole month, in order to give the priests time to sanctify themselves, and to enable the people to assemble at Jerusalem from the distant parts of the land; for he desired, that on that occasion, the Israelites should flock to the capital from Dan to Beersheba. He sent out his messengers not only through Judah, but to the towns of the rival king-

dom, inviting them to take part in the great feast of gratitude and rejoicing. In the provinces of Israel, the messengers were generally received with the utmost scorn and derision. Yet a few from the tribes of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulon, obeyed the summons and joined the people of Judah, who all hastened to the Temple as with one heart. For so long a time had the Divine commands been neglected, that many appeared in the holy place unsanctified. But Hezekiah, rejoicing at their presence, prayed for them: "The good Lord pardon every one that prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purifications of the Sanctuary!" The Passover was celebrated with great solemnity and innumerable sacrifices for fourteen days; it was the beginning of a new religious life that dawned upon Judah.

Hezekiah displayed equal energy in protecting his kingdom from external dangers. He undertook an expedition against the Philistines who, restless and aggressive as ever, menaced his territory; he demolished their forts, took their stronghold Gaza, and devastated a large portion of their land.

Then aspiring to greater aims, he determined to shake off the galling yoke of dependence, refused to pay the tribute money, and rebelled against Assyria. This daring step naturally provoked the anger of the mighty king Sennacherib; his troops poured into Judah, and easily took the fenced cities. Hezekiah's courage failed him, he saw no hope of deliverance or victory, and sent a messenger to the king of Assyria with these humiliating words: "I have offended; return from me; that which thou puttest on me will I bear." Sennacherib, greedy for treasure, exacted three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. To comply with this demand, Hezekiah was compelled to despoil his own palace and the Temple of God, even to tear

the gold from its doors and pillars. It appears, however, that he entered into secret negotiations with the king of Egypt, who promised assistance. The rumour of these plots reached the ears of Sennacherib; his anger was aroused, and he now insisted upon the absolute subjection of Judah. He was encamped in Lachish, in the land of Judah itself. From thence he sent his three generals Tartan, Rabsaris, and Rabshakeh, with a large army against Jerusalem, to which they at once began to lay siege. It was a terrible trial for the people of Judah.

The king sent out three of his counsellors, Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah, to speak with the Assyrian officers, whilst the people came thronging upon the wall to hear the reply of the enemy. As soon as the Hebrew messengers approached, Rabshakeh addressed them in these haughty terms: "Speak you now to Hezekiah, Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? Thou sayest (but they are but vain words), I have counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to all that trust on him. But if you say to me, We trust in the Lord our God: is not that he whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said to Judah and Jerusalem, You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem? Now, therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. How then wilt thou withstand one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? Am I now come up without the Lord against this place to

destroy it? The Lord said to me, Go up against this land and destroy it."

Eliakim and his two friends were greatly alarmed at these insulting words; they feared that the people on the walls hearing them, would lose all courage, and perchance waver in their allegiance to their king. So they bade the spokesman use the Aramean tongue instead of the Hebrew. But Rabshakeh, easily devining their intention, cried with a loud voice in the language of the people of Judah: "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria. Thus says the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand . . . Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then shall every man eat of his own vine and every one of his fig-tree, and every one shall drink the waters of his cistern; until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil-olive and of honey that you may live and not die; and hearken not to Hezekiah, when he persuades you, saying, The Lord will deliver us."

When the words of the Assyrians were reported to the king, he rent his garments and put on sackcloth, and went into the Temple of the Lord. Then, in the anguish of his heart, he sent some of his servants to the great and pious Isaiah, entreating him to pray to God for His unhappy people. But the prophet saw no cause for alarm; even from the power of the mighty Assyrian monarch the Lord would save His chosen nation.

Meanwhile Sennacherib had advanced from Lachish to Libnah. Here he was informed that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, was marching northwards with an army, perhaps to aid the king of Egypt in the approaching danger that threatened him from the Assyrians. He now insisted upon Hezekiah's immediate and unconditional submission. He

sent again messengers to him with a letter containing these words: "Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered them whom my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Thelasar? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sapharvaim, of Hena, and Ivah?" Hezekiah went up into the Temple with the letter in his hand, and "spread it out before the Lord." Then he prayed with all the agony of despair, and with all the fervour of his pious and trustful nature. That cry was heard and answered. Through the prophet Isaiah he received glad tidings; help was near at hand; the Assyrian was to fall, but not by the archers of Benjamin or the warriors of Judah; a greater power than theirs was to lay the proud heathen low. "He shall not come," concluded the prophet, "into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast up a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, says the Lord."

The prediction of Isaiah was fulfilled: that very night the vast Assyrian army, encamped before the walls of Jerusalem, was smitten with pestilence by the angel of the Lord. The trembling people of Judah beheld in the dim morning light the scattered corpses — silent witnesses of the power of their God. Sennacherib had escaped, but only to meet a death hardly less terrible; for when he returned to Nineveh, and was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, he was murdered by two of his sons, who escaped into Armenia, while their brother Esarhaddon was proclaimed king of Assyria.

Not long after these events, Hezekiah became dangerously ill, and he felt that death was approaching. Isaiah came to him and said, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." When the king heard these words, he prayed fervently to the Lord that he might be permitted to recover. The request uttered with tears was granted; it was again the voice of Isaiah which brought the joyful message that the king's life would be prolonged for fifteen years; and it was the hand of Isaiah that put the healing figs upon the boil which threatened the king's days. So wonderful did this recovery appear to the grateful Hezekiah, that he entreated Isaiah to convince him by a sign of the efficacy of the cure. The miracle was vouchsafed by the intercession of the prophet: the shadow on the sun-dial which stood in the garden of the palace, went back ten degrees. Hezekiah marked his final restoration to life and health by a beautiful hymn of praise, which he offered up to the Lord as he entered the Temple.

About this time, glimpses are revealed to us of a vigorous people — the Chaldeans or Babylonians — who suddenly emerged from obscurity, and were soon to assert themselves as one of the greatest powers that ever ruled in the East. That people was destined to overthrow the mighty empire of Assyria, which was now fast decaying through its inordinate pomp and luxury.

Merodach Baladan, the first Babylonian king, had heard of the little empire of Judah and of its pious monarch Hezekiah, and most probably also of the dreadful fate that had befallen the Assyrian army under Sennacherib before the walls of Jerusalem. Partly out of curiosity, and partly with a view to ultimate conquest, he sent messengers to Hezekiah with friendly greetings and presents. The king, full of cordial courtesy, and suspecting no hostile motives, showed them all the treasures collected in the palace. As

soon as they had departed, the prophet Isaiah appeared before Hezekiah, and being informed of the visit of the Babylonians, and hearing that they had been shown all the wealth stored up in the king's residence, he spoke these ominous words: "Behold, the days come when all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store for thee to this day, shall be carried into Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the Lord." But Hezekiah could not grieve for future troubles. His calm and simple nature was ready to enjoy the present. "Good is the word of the Lord," he exclaimed, "that thou hast spoken: it is good if rest and truth be in my days."

The closing years of Hezekiah's reign passed peacefully for himself and his people. He improved Jerusalem by building an aqueduct and bringing water into the city; he erected vast store-houses for supplies of corn, wine, and oil, and directed the attention of his herdsmen to the increase of the flocks. Moreover, he showed a love of wisdom and learning by causing a collection of proverbs, which till then may only have been preserved by oral tradition, to be compiled by his scribes (Proverbs XXV—XXIX).

Though Hezekiah's reign was not free from trials and dangers, it was remarkable for political and religious energy, for extraordinary efforts to maintain the independence and to increase the resources of the kingdom. Well, therefore, may the people have mourned when Hezekiah died, and his name have been treasured in honourable remembrance.

142. MANASSEH (699—644).

[2 Kings XXI. 1–18; 2 Chron. XXXIII. 1–20.]

Manasseh was a child of twelve years of age when he succeeded his father, whose good qualities unfortunately he did not inherit. He was a determined and even fanatic idolator.

As he grew up, he took delight in introducing into his kingdom the superstitions of every heathen country. The high places were restored, the groves re-planted, the many altars of Baal and Ashtarte re-built. The sun, the moon, and all the heavenly hosts were adored. The gods of Ammon, of Moab, and of Edom were zealously worshipped everywhere. Babylonian and Egyptian paganism was rife; incense and offerings rose on the roofs of the houses to the fabled deities of the heights; wizards practised their enchantments and pretended to raise the dead from their graves and to reveal the mysteries of the future; and the valley of Hinnom was once more disgraced by the hideous statue of Moloch, to whom parents offered up their children as burnt-sacrifices. In the very Temple of the Lord stood an image of Ashtarte; and in the entrance of the Court were placed white horses harnessed to a splendid chariot sacred to the sun.

These evil practices were carried on almost unreproved; for that voice which, during three preceding reigns, had warned and guided, was silenced — Isaiah died in the commencement of Manasseh's rule; tradition relates that he suffered a violent death at the hands of the ungrateful tyrant, who fiercely and relentlessly continued his career of idolatry and violence; for he "shed much innocent blood, until he had filled with it Jerusalem from one end to another."

According to one account — that of the Chronist — the Assyrians invaded Judea, and carried Manasseh away to Babylon; in his sad captivity, he humbled himself before the Lord, and fervently prayed to Him for deliverance; he was permitted to return to his much-tried country, and thenceforth abandoned his heathen practices, and introduced the worship of the Lord. Of all this the older narrative — that of the Books of Kings — makes no mention; it is, on the contrary, consistent in its blame of Manasseh: "And the

Lord spoke by His servants the prophets, saying, Because Manasseh, king of Judah, has done these abominations, and has done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols; therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever hears of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem, as a man wipes a dish — when he has wiped it, he turns it upside down. And I will forsake the remnant of My inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies."

When death ended his long and impious reign, Manasseh was succeeded by his son.

143. AMON (644—642).

[2 Kings XXI. 19—26; 2 Chron. XXXIII. 20—25.]

This unhappy monarch was an obstinate idolator like his father. He ruled only for two years, when he was assassinated by his servants in his own house. But the people avenged his death; they slew the murderers, and declared Josiah, the king's son, his successor.

144. JOSIAH (642—611).

[2 Kings XXII. 1—XXIII. 30; 2 Chron. XXXIV. XXXV.]

When Josiah came to the throne, he was only eight years old. It was fortunate for him and his country that his inexperience was guided by a number of pious and godfearing men who, counterbalancing the corrupt influences of his

earliest education, imbued his susceptible mind with principles of righteousness, and taught him to understand the truths of the pure religion of Israel. Thus he grew up under the care of the wise and zealous High-priest Hilkiah and his son; he was watched over by Shaphan, a learned scribe, and his son Ahikam, by Shallum, the faithful keeper of the royal wardrobe, and his wife Hulda, the inspired prophetess. Not much later, he must have felt the power of the youthful Jeremiah, who soon became the leading spirit of the age. These devoted men and others like them, were left as the germs of a new and better race to grow up after the general destruction which was impending over Judah.

For a time it might have seemed as if that doom could still be averted: so strong were the hopes which the piety of Josiah raised in the hearts of all patriots, and an event soon happened which awoke even the enthusiasm of the people. In the eighteenth year of his reign, Josiah resolved to carry out, with greater energy than had been done of late, the necessary repairs of the Temple. The work was forthwith commenced. During its progress, and when a heap of long accumulated rubbish was being cleared away, a written scroll was discovered. It was examined by Hilkiah the High-priest, who exclaimed, "The Book of the Law have I found in the House of the Lord!" It was most probably the Book of Deuteronomy. The High-priest gave it to Shaphan the scribe, who took it to the king, and read to him its contents. It was the first time that Josiah heard the words of the Law, which had before been completely unknown to him. Feeling that he had till then violated the Divine precepts, he was terrified and grieved, and in his agony rent his clothes. He could not rest until he had sought counsel of the Lord. So he commanded his most faithful servants: "Go, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this Book that is found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that

is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened to the words of this Book to do according to all that is written therein." The High-priest, who seemed as much perplexed as the king himself, went with the others to the prophetess Hulda. She was ready with an answer. "Tell the man that sent you to me: Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the Book which the king of Judah has read; because they have forsaken Me, and have burnt incense to other gods.... But as touching the words which thou hast heard, because thy heart was moved, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou didst hear what I spoke against this place and against the inhabitants thereof:... I also have heard thee, says the Lord; behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace, and thy eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place."

These words were faithfully reported to king Josiah, who determined that the Law should no longer remain unknown among his people, but that it should be spread through the length and breadth of the land.

The Temple, newly restored from its state of ruin, was open to receive the vast crowd that poured in at the command of the king: the priesthood, now one of the greatest powers in Judah, the prophets, nobly struggling to sustain their exalted mission, the princes, the chiefs, and the people, men, women, and children, all thronged into the wide Court of the Holy Place to hear the recovered word of God. Leaning on the royal stand, was the king Josiah, with the sacred scroll in his hand; beside him most probably stood the little group of his friends and counsellors — the High-priest Hilkiah, Shaphan the scribe, Shallum, and the prophet Jeremiah. — Every word of the scroll was recited by the king and eagerly listened to by the multitude; and when the

reading was ended, the king "made a covenant before the Lord to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all their heart and with all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this Book." The people readily consented, and pledged themselves to faithful obedience.

As the first and most necessary act of reform, the king ordered the complete removal of every kind of idolatry. He carried out this object with unflinching energy. The Temple was thoroughly cleansed of the polluting idols; the vessels used for the service of "Baal, Ashtarte, and all the host of heaven," were burnt in the fields of Kidron, and their ashes scattered in Bethel, the northern town defiled by the worship of Apis; the altars on the high places were cut down, the groves destroyed, the idols shattered; the horses of the sun were taken from the Courts of the Temple, and the chariots burnt; the altars which Ahaz had built on the roof of his palace, and those by which Manasseh had disgraced the streets of Jerusalem, were beaten into dust, which was thrown into the brook of Kidron. The furnace of Moloch was taken from the valley of Hinnom, and this place was so contaminated that it was accursed for ever. The soothsayers and sorcerers were banished, and the false priests destroyed by the sword. That ancient seat of idolatry, Bethel, was not spared; the altar of Jeroboam was broken in pieces, the high place demolished, and the image of Ashtarte crushed to dust; even the bones of the dead idolators were dug from their graves and burnt upon the heathen altars; only the bones of the prophet of Judah who had come to warn Jeroboam, and those of the prophet who had received him in his house, were left undisturbed (see p. 440). Pursuing his stern retribution, Josiah travelled through Samaria, and finding the priests sacrificing to idols, slew them and burnt their bodies upon their altars. Like a breath of

fire was this sudden visitation: the land seemed thoroughly purged from idolatry.

And now the king began to consider how he might worthily commemorate Judah's return to God. The season of the year was favourable; for the festival of Passover was approaching; and surely nothing could be more appropriate for the occasion than to celebrate with more than usual solemnity the anniversary of Israel's release from bondage and superstition. Josiah's call was eagerly responded to by the whole nation. "Indeed there was not held such a Passover from the days of the Judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel nor of the kings of Judah." And well might the sacred historian add, "Like Josiah was there no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart and soul."

In his manifold efforts the king was supported and encouraged by those wise and earnest men, whose writings have immortalised his name and age.

Foremost among all was Jeremiah, who is completely identified with the last sad throes of the history of Judah; there was Zephaniah, the severe and terrible prophet of evil; and Habakkuk who, standing on his lonely watch-tower, gazed from his high vantage-ground upon the approaching Chaldees. These and other high-souled men wrote in tears and in blood the last sad tale of their country's ruin.

In Josiah's time, the wild hordes of Scythians, breaking for the first time from their northern home, overran the blooming and fertile lands of the south. They passed through Palestine on their way to Egypt, and perhaps left a record of their presence in the city of Scythopolis, as the ancient town of Beth-shean in Manasseh was later re-named. It is not impossible that Zephaniah, and perhaps also Jeremiah (ch. IV—VI), allude to their dreaded invasion; but it ap-

pears that they inflicted no serious injury upon the land, but seem to have quietly passed along the coast of the Mediterranean, and hence their expedition is neither mentioned in the Books of Kings nor by Josephus.

The Assyrian empire, collapsing by its own vastness, succumbed to the warlike and impetuous Chaldee tribes coming from the mountain districts of Kurdistan. Nineveh fell; a new empire was founded under the rule of the conqueror Nabopolassar, with Babylon as its chief city. Josiah was fully aware of the difficulties of his position. He knew well that a struggle for superiority could not fail to break out before long between the two rival kingdoms of Babylon and Egypt, and that the possession of Palestine was most important for both as the great military high-road between the Euphrates and the Nile. He saw the necessity for the utmost prudence, and he made every effort to maintain relations of friendship with the new eastern dynasty. But no wisdom or moderation could avert the impending danger. Pharaoh Necho, the king of Egypt, alarmed at the constant growth of the Babylonian power, determined at once to check its progress, and to humble the upstart empire. He marched north-eastward with a vast army; Josiah, true to his Babylonian alliance, opposed his advance. In the plains of Megiddo, which more than once before had resounded to the war-cry, the two armies met. Necho, desirous to spare the brave king of Judah, requested him to desist from hostilities, and to allow him to continue his way in peace; but the request was refused and a battle ensued. Disguised in the dress of a common soldier, Josiah took part in the combat, but he was mortally wounded by an arrow shot at random by an Egyptian archer. His devoted servants conveyed him from the battle-field to Jerusalem, where he died.

There was deep-felt mourning throughout the land for the loss of the noble and pious king Josiah; indeed with

him the glory of the nation departed. He had re-instated the pure worship of God, and he had tried by wisdom and untiring zeal to prop up the tottering monarchy, and to cause it to be again respected abroad. At his death, the last flicker of liberty and independence waned, and the dark clouds gathering upon the horizon threatened to break with terrible violence over the doomed people.

The pathetic voice of Jeremiah and those of many other prophets and poets were heard in songs of lamentation at the king's untimely death; these lays were taken up and long rehearsed by the people of Judah; but they have unfortunately not been preserved.

145. JEHOAHAZ OR SHALLUM (611).

[2 Kings XXIII. 30–34; 2 Chron. XXXVI. 1–4.]

The people raised Jehoahaz, one of Josiah's sons, to the throne, but he reigned only for three months. Idolatrous and weak, he was an unworthy successor of his great father. By acts of imprudence he provoked the anger of Pharaoh Necho, who had in the mean time advanced to Riblah near Hamath, towards the north-eastern frontier of Palestine. He was attacked by an army of Necho, taken a captive to Riblah, and then sent in fetters to Egypt, where he died not long afterwards. Necho now exacted a heavy tribute from the unfortunate people, and placed Eliakim on the vacant throne, changing his name into Joiakim.

146. JOIAKIM (611—599).

[2 Kings XXIII. 34 — XXIV. 6; 2 Chron. XXXVI. 4–8.]

Not warned by the sad misfortunes of his predecessor, this monarch persevered in the same ways of wickedness and idolatry. He was blind to the troubles that gathered

around him. He had indeed to fear no immediate danger from the Egyptians. For king Necho II was defeated by the Babylonians in a great and decisive battle at Circesium (or Carchemish) on the Euphrates, whither he had boldly advanced (606), and in consequence of this defeat he lost "all the land from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates" that had belonged to him. But Joiakim had all the more reason to dread the victor in that sanguinary war — Nebuchadnezzar, the heir to the throne, and soon the king of Babylon, a man possessed of restless ambition and an insatiable desire of conquest. Faithful to his life-long mission, Jeremiah, ever watchful, and untiring in the service of his country, followed these events with anxious care. In the fourth year of Joiakim's reign, he saw that grave trials were near at hand, and he raised his warning voice with more than ordinary ardour. Standing within the Court of the Temple, he addressed the assembled priests and the people: "Thus says the Lord, If you will not hearken to Me, to walk in My Law, which I have set before you, to listen to the words of My servants the prophets whom I continually sent to you, from the beginning and early, but to whom you have not hearkened: then will I make this House like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth."

These solemn words touched no responsive chord in the hearts of the hearers, who turned angrily upon Jeremiah, exclaiming, "Thou shalt surely die." The outcry of the people brought the chief men of Judah from the king's palace to the Court of the Temple; they seated themselves as in judgment round the gates, and decreed that the audacious prophet of evil should suffer death. But Jeremiah was not afraid; he had obeyed the command of God. "The Lord sent me," he said, "to prophesy against this House and against this city... Now amend your ways and doings, obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will repent of

the evil He has pronounced against you. As for me, I am in your hand, do with me as seems good and meet to you. But know for certain that if you put me to death, you shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and upon the inhabitants thereof."

The people now demurred and began to feel that Jeremiah ought not to be put to death; some of the elders even cited as a precedent the prophet Micah who, in the time of Hezekiah, had predicted the ruin and devastation of Jerusalem, and whose warnings had been respected and followed by the king. Nor did Jeremiah stand alone in his fearless reproofs; his example stimulated other prophets, among whom Uriah was conspicuous by the boldness of his denunciations. The king's anger was roused; Uriah fled for his life into Egypt, but the royal messengers pursued him and dragged him back to Jerusalem, where he was mercilessly slain and "cast into the burial place of the common people."

Yet Jeremiah, unconcerned for his own safety, never wavered in his counsels. The king and the people, fatally miscalculating their strength, were determined to oppose the Babylonian hosts who were advancing under the impetuous leadership of Nebuchadnezzar himself. The prophet, convinced of their blind infatuation, strongly and anxiously advised them to yield. "Serve the king of Babylon," he said, "and live; wherefore should this city be laid waste?"

Nebuchadnezzar, remaining in the north, sent a part of his army southward to invade Judea; Joiakim was forced into submission, and a heavy tax was imposed upon the land. For three years the tribute was paid, but in the fourth it was refused. To punish this rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar in wrath and anger sent again his hosts into Judah, together with troops from Syria, Moab, and Ammon. But before the Babylonian forces arrived or had achieved any decisive

triumph, Joiakim had died in peace, and his son Jehoiachin had succeeded him.

147. JEHOIACHIN (599).

[2 Kings XXIV. 6—15; XXV. 27—30; 2 Chron. XXXVI. 8—10.]

Jerusalem was besieged, Nebuchadnezzar himself joined the army, and Jehoiachin, after an idolatrous reign of only three months, delivered himself up to the Babylonian monarch, together with his mother and all his chief officers (599). Nebuchadnezzar now plundered the Temple and the royal palace, and carried away from Jerusalem 10,000 captives, including the king and his family, all the men of influence and wealth, with all the artisans; he left behind none but the very poorest of the population, over whom he appointed Mattaniah, the uncle of Jehoiachin, as tributary king, changing his name into Zedekiah. — The first act in the downfall of Judah had been completed; only the empty shadow of an empire remained.

148. ZEDEKIAH (599—588).

[2 Kings XXIV. 17 — XXV. 7; 2 Chron. XXXVI. 10 sqq.]

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he ascended the degraded throne of his ancestors as vassal of Nebuchadnezzar. But he chafed against the galling yoke, and his discontent was fostered by flattering prophets who constantly preached insurrection, and by the thoughtless multitude who madly applauded their advice. He secretly sought the assistance of Egypt, the implacable enemy of Babylon. Jeremiah was one of the few who preserved calmness and prudence amidst the giddy hopes and schemes; he insisted upon a fair fulfilment of the engagements to which the king was pledged; in this he saw the only means of safety; even

to his captive brethren in Babylon he sent, in a letter, a similar counsel: "Build houses and dwell in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit; ... see the peace of the city whither you are led captives, and pray for it to the Lord; for its peace will be your peace also;" in seventy years they would be brought back rejoicing into their own land; till then they should suffer in trustful patience.

The king was deaf alike to Jeremiah's entreaties, arguments, and bitter reproof. He entered into an alliance with Psammethis II, king of Egypt, and in the ninth year of his reign (590) he openly declared his revolt against the Chaldees by withholding the stipulated tribute. The Babylonian troops stationed in Syria marched at once against Jerusalem, and besieged it; but being informed of the approach of an Egyptian army, they retreated northwards. However, Nebuchadnezzar himself now advanced with a vast army; he remained at Riblah, while he sent his troops southwards. Jerusalem was besieged. In vain Jeremiah advised again a timely surrender. After eighteen months, the famine in the town was so fearful that the people were seized by frenzy and despair; the most horrible deeds of atrocity were committed to satisfy the maddening hunger. At last king Zedekiah and many of his soldiers escaped from the city, but the army was routed, Zedekiah himself and his sons were captured near Jericho, and brought before Nebuchadnezzar to Riblah. Here his sons were slain in his presence, then his own eyes were put out, and he was sent in fetters to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar now despatched Nebuzarradan, the chief of his guard, to Jerusalem with the command to punish the rebellious town (588). The Babylonian general sternly carried out that terrible mandate. He marched into Jerusalem, and broke down its walls; he burnt the Temple, the stately palaces, and all the better houses; he took the large brazen pillars and all the holy

vessels; he carried away many thousand Jews as slaves, only leaving behind a number of poor agriculturists, over whom he set as governor Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, of a good Jewish family; and he took the chief priests and the civil and military officers to Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to be put to death.

Among the few men of distinction who were spared by the Babylonian king, was Jeremiah, who had always exhorted the people to moderation. At the capture of Jerusalem, he was found in the court of the prison; he was taken to Ramah to Nebuchadnezzar, who allowed him to choose between remaining in Canaan or going to Babylon as the honoured friend of the royal house. Jeremiah preferred ending his life on the soil of Judah, amidst the ruins of his beloved country, once so rich and so blooming. Laden with presents, he went to Mizpah where Gedaliah had established the seat of his governorship under the protection of a small Babylonian garrison: he trusted Gedaliah, because his father Ahikam had more than once saved his life by shielding him from the rage of the people. The share which Jeremiah took in the events that happened from the beginning of the Babylonian invasion till long after its conclusion, will be more fully set forth in that section of the Second Part of this work which is devoted to the life and the writings of the great prophet.

XII. THE JEWS UNDER BABYLONIAN RULE.

(588—536.)

149. GEDALIAH (588—560).

[2 Kings XXV. 22–26; Jerem. XL. XLI.]

The few patriots who remained in the land of their ancestors, rested their last hope in Gedaliah, a man of wisdom and zeal, eagerly and honestly intent upon improving his scanty resources with the utmost prudence and care. He encouraged the people to cultivate with untiring diligence the fields and vineyards which Nebuchadnezzar had given them, and thus to lay the foundation of a better future. The fame of the new and industrious settlement soon spread abroad, and it attracted towards Judea all those Hebrews who, in times of danger, had escaped to places of safety in the neighbouring countries, to the districts of Ammon and Moab, to Edom and the desert. All these came to Gedaliah in Mizpah, who joyfully received them with this admonition: "Fear not to serve the Chaldeans; dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans who will come to us: but you, gather wine and summer fruits and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your

cities that you have occupied." It seems that this judicious advice fell upon willing ears; the community prospered and grew in number and wealth: "they gathered wine and summer fruits in abundance." They even began to establish a new Sanctuary in the place of the destroyed Temple, and they had every prospect of gradually retrieving at least a part of their former strength, if not their independence. But the growth of the young commonwealth was suddenly checked by a cowardly deed of bloodshed and treachery.

Among the immigrants who had joined Gedaliah at Mizpah, was Ishmael, the son of Nathaniah, an ambitious and unscrupulous man, descended from the royal house of David, and aspiring to the governorship over the remnant of Judah. His plans were fostered and accelerated by Baalis, king of Ammon, who saw with jealousy and apprehension the increasing welfare of the small Hebrew colony. He was easily persuaded to attempt the assassination of Gedaliah, to whose wise and zealous guidance that unexpected prosperity was justly attributed. He gained a number of associates, and at once proceeded to carry his sinister plans into effect. The conspiracy became known to Johanan, a devoted officer of Gedaliah, and he warned him of the danger. But the true and generous nature of Gedaliah shrank from believing such treachery. Johanan anxiously entreated and implored him to be on his guard, as upon him depended the fortunes of Israel's remnant; he offered to slay Ishmael secretly so that no suspicion would be roused; but Gedaliah rejected the proposal indignantly, saying, "Thou shalt not do this thing, for thou speakest a lie of Ishmael." To show his entire confidence, he invited Ishmael with ten of his friends to a feast at Mizpah. During the meal, the audacious Ishmael arose and, assisted by his friends, slew his host. He had well prepared his plans, and now commenced a terrible massacre. He murdered not only all the

more prominent followers of Gedaliah, but also the Chaldean soldiers whom Nebuchadnezzar had left behind in Mizpah. All this was done with such precautions that for several days nothing was known of it beyond the precincts of the town; and when eighty men arrived from Shechem, Shilo, and Samaria, with offerings and presents for the new Sanctuary, Ishmael went out to meet them, and said, "Come to Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam;" but when they were within the walls of Mizpah, they were treacherously slain by Ishmael and his men, and thrown into a large pit together with the other corpses.

Now Ishmael left Mizpah with those whom he had spared, to carry them away as bondmen into the land of the Ammonites. But Johanan and a few of his brave men had escaped the massacre. Heading this small but resolute band, he pursued the impious murderer, and soon overtook him near Gibeon in Benjamin. When the unhappy captives saw their armed brethren, they hailed them with rejoicing as their deliverers, broke with a desperate effort from Ishmael, and joined Johanan and his men. Ishmael, who saw that resistance was unavailing, was glad to flee with a few followers, and made good his escape to the Ammonites.

150. EMIGRATION TO EGYPT.

[2 Kings XXV. 26; Jer. XLII–XLV.]

The Jews were now in a position replete with the greatest dangers. By the massacre of the Chaldean garrison and the murder of Gedaliah, the appointed representative of the Chaldean power in Judah, they had drawn upon themselves the terrible wrath of the Babylonian king. They knew his haughty and impetuous spirit too well, not to fear his speedy revenge. Yet whither should they turn? Where could they find a safer abode than in the land of their ances-

tors? On returning from their pursuit of Ishmael, they did not take a northerly direction back to Mizpah, but proceeded southward, and halted near Bethlehem, to consider their condition and prospects. By choosing that route, they had almost betrayed their intention; for Bethlehem lay on the high caravan road from Canaan to Egypt, and it was in the land of the Pharaohs that they evidently desired to seek refuge. Yet they were anxious to have the Divine sanction for their plan; they seemed undecided; they might have feared the danger of settling in a country that was proverbially inhospitable to strangers, and had once before been a house of bitter slavery to their fathers. To whom should they turn for counsel and guidance? There was still among them that faithful adviser who had readily shared their many trials and misfortunes, and who, in spite of ignominy and persecution, had clung to them with unwavering affection. To him, to Jeremiah, they looked in their perplexity, and solemnly promised to act upon whatever counsel he might give them. After deliberating for ten days, Jeremiah spoke to the assembled people: "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel... If you will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not pluck you up.... Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid,... for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand,... and cause you to return to your own land. ... But if you say, We will not dwell in this land, nor obey the voice of the Lord your God, saying, No, but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread;... then it shall come to pass that the sword, which you feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof you were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there you shall die."

But it now became apparent that the people had al-

ready formed their unalterable resolution. In spite of the pledges given to Jeremiah that they would strictly follow his advice, they answered unblushingly, "Thou speakest falsely; the Lord our God has not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there; but Baruch, the son of Neriah, sets thee on against us, to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon." — Then they all forthwith broke up from Bethlehem, men and women and children, and proceeded towards Egypt; nay, they forced the aged prophet and his devoted scribe Baruch to accompany them to the hateful land. At the border town Tahpanhes (Daphne), a fortified city near Pelusium, they stopped, and from thence they gradually spread through many parts of Egypt. But even here they adhered to their old and inveterate superstitions; idolatry flourished among them as it had flourished in Judea; they even gloried in their abominations, and expected to find in them safety and happiness. In vain Jeremiah preached and rebuked and entreated; he was met as before with scorn and derision; and when he died full of years, he saw with sorrow his degenerate countrymen steeped in all the heathen perversities, from which not even the Divine guidance and training of fifteen centuries had been able to wean them.

151. THE JEWS IN BABYLON.

[Daniel I sqq.; Ezekiel I sqq.; Isaiah XL sqq.; 2 Kings XXV. 27—30; etc.]

Having followed the history of the small colony of Jews who had been left in Palestine, and who ultimately settled in Egypt, we must return to the far greater number of those who were sent as captives to Babylon with their king Jehoiachin, and to whom later, after the fall of Jerusalem, were added nearly all the remaining inhabitants of

Judea. Nebuchadnezzar had taken care to transport to Babylon especially men of ability and genius, artists famous as carvers in wood, and skilled as workers in gold and silver, men who had beautified and enriched Jerusalem; and he desired them now to employ their talents and their arts in adorning his capital Babylon. Anxious to refine the tastes and cultivate the minds of his own subjects, he received youths of remarkable intelligence and knowledge in the royal palace, where they were instructed in the Chaldean language and philosophy, so that they might impart to the Babylonians their own superior learning. So far, therefore, from oppressing the Jews, he made every effort to win their affection for their adopted land and its government. He was shrewd enough to perceive the peculiar character of the conquered people. He must have respected, even if he did not understand, their religious convictions, which had armed them with strength to subdue much more powerful tribes, and to maintain themselves in the midst of warlike enemies for nearly nine hundred years. He must have heard of the glories of king Solomon's reign, the fame of which was spread throughout the East, and was long and fondly cherished. He was, no doubt, familiar with the names of Moses and Isaiah, of Amos, Joel, and Micah; and we have seen how he honoured his great contemporary Jeremiah.

Thus the exiles were received and treated with kindness. They lived together in large colonies, preserved many of their old institutions, had their own elders and judges, and even a common chief. They began to found new homes in the foreign land, to entwine its welfare with their own, and to undertake the duties, as they enjoyed the rights, of Babylonian citizens. Yet they could not forget the country of their birth, nor the capital hallowed by their glorious Temple. From the singularly varied and picturesque land of Palestine, from the rugged mountains and the wooded

or vine-clad hills of Judah, they had been transplanted to the flat and monotonous tracts of Chaldea. They may indeed have looked with amazement on Babylon, a city of enormous and almost fabulous extent, covering an area of no less than 225 square miles, with a hundred brazen gates; with the magnificent temple of Bel and the royal palace, a marvel of size and splendour; with the wonderful bridge over the Euphrates, and gardens and fields so extensive that their produce sufficed, in times of war, for the maintenance of a large garrison. Yet despite its singular grandeur and pomp, Babylon seemed strange and dreary to the exiles; they could not suppress a painful longing for their own beautiful home, for their rock-crowned citadel of Jerusalem. A Jewish poet of the time gave thus expression to the common feelings of his contemporaries:

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, and we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that subdued us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.... O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewards thee as thou hast served us."

Many other Psalms originated in this period of bondage. Nor were prophets wanting eager to fan the flame of patriotism by their lofty eloquence. Among these Ezekiel, who lived in the large Jewish settlement on the river Chaboras, a tributary of the Euphrates, exercised the most powerful influence. "To the bold and rapid creations of the earlier Hebrew poets, he adds not merely a vehement and tragical

force, peculiar to his own mind, but a vastness and magnificence of imagery drawn from the scenery and circumstances by which he was surrounded." *)

He was of priestly descent, and seems himself to have performed sacerdotal functions at the Temple in Jerusalem. Therefore, his thoughts naturally turned to the re-building of the Sanctuary, and in soaring visions he described the stateliness of the new edifice and the splendour of public worship to be conducted by a pious and revered priesthood. Besides Ezekiel we find another prophet, whose writings have in our Canon been incorporated with those of the great Isaiah of Hezekiah's time, and who is therefore called the second or later Isaiah. He was master of a style the poetic beauty of which is unsurpassed among Hebrew writers; he may be inferior to the elder Isaiah in power and variety, but he equals him in sublimity and ardent patriotism. He taught, admonished and elevated his countrymen, and as the years of the exile rolled on, he cheered them with the glad pictures of liberty, of return to their old home, and of restoration to their old glory.**) Men like Ezekiel and the second Isaiah proved that the old spirit of Judah was not crushed, that the old power and culture of mind had not vanished; and it was probably owing to such men that the Jewish captives were treated by their conquerors with kindness and forbearance, and in some cases even with distinction.

Such an instance is recorded in the history of Daniel, one of the most remarkable among the youths educated in the royal palace.

From an early age he was conspicuous for piety, intelligence, unusual love of learning, and above all for sincere and ardent attachment to the precepts of his

*) Milman, History of the Jews, vol. I. p. 410.

**) For a fuller account of these prophets, see vol. II.

Divine faith. Brought into close contact with the great Chaldean monarch, he was in the eyes of the latter the chief representative of the Jewish people and the Jewish religion. To him it was given to relate and interpret dreams, and to unravel mysteries which baffled the shrewdness of all the magicians of Chaldea. He was therefore raised to an exalted station second only to that of the king himself.*)

In the year 562, Nebuchadnezzar died and was succeeded by his son Evil Merodach. The new monarch liberated Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, who had been kept in prison for thirty-seven years; he treated him kindly, assigned to him a high rank at his court, and provided for him with great liberality. Thus the bitterness between the conquerors and the conquered died more and more away, and the latter had little cause for complaint.

When Evil Merodach died, his brother Belshazzar came to the throne (541). In the mean time, eastern Asia had been convulsed by the irresistible progress of a new conquering power — the Persians. They were as yet a simple and hardy race, untainted by luxury and effeminacy. Their fare was rude and their mode of life almost primitive; they were inured to danger and insensible to fatigue, brave, enterprising, and warlike. They had made themselves the masters of the great kingdom of Media, and were impetuously pressing westward. The next object of their ambition was the magnificent Chaldean empire. Well might the degenerate Babylonians dread such foes.

The fall of Babylon is predicted, in a remarkable narrative of the Book of Daniel (ch. V), by an inscription mysteriously written on the wall of the royal banqueting hall, where king Belshazzar was revelling with his courtiers and profaning the holy vessels which had been taken from the

*) On the prophecies of the Book of Daniel, see vol. II.

Temple*). Belshazzar was slain in the very night of that vision. Babylon was conquered (538), and soon the name of Cyrus, king of Persia, filled the earth. He added victory to victory, until his sway was acknowledged from the Aegean sea to the Indus, and from the Caspian sea to the Indian ocean. The Jews became subjects of the Persians, and Daniel, still treated with honour and distinction, was appointed one of the great monarch's satraps.

*) See vol. II, Daniel.

XIII. THE JEWS UNDER PERSIAN RULE.

(538—330.)

152. RETURN OF THE JEWS TO CANAAN (538).

[Ezra I. II.]

The religion of the Persians had important points of resemblance with that of the Jews. The Persians suffered no representation of the deity, nor any idols; they held even temples superfluous, believing that the abode of the gods is everywhere as far as the world extends. Cyrus, therefore, evinced deep reverence for the God of the Jews, and warm sympathy with their loss of country and independence. He determined to restore them to their old homes and institutions, and in the very first year after his conquest of Babylon, he issued this edict throughout his empire: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has charged me to build Him a House at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people — his God be with him — who will go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the House of the Lord God of Israel? He is the God.'" This edict stirred the hearts of the captive Jews with enthusiasm. Jerusalem and the Temple, as the emblems of freedom and prosperity, rose before their enchanted vision; the name

of Cyrus was blessed by every lip; and it is enshrined in the sublime pages of the second Isaiah. Soon the land rang with busy preparations for the homeward journey; the Jews received from the Persians and Babylonians as parting gifts gold and costly ornaments, and all kinds of cattle; and Cyrus not only granted them large sums for defraying the first expenses of their new settlement, but he restored to them all the gold and silver vessels — 5400 in number — which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from the Temple, and which he and his successors had so often desecrated at their licentious banquets. At last the great caravan set out on its way; it consisted of 42,360 souls, men, women, and children, among whom there was a large proportion of priests and Levites (more than 4600), besides about 7000 men- and maidservants. They were led by Zerubbabel (or Sheshbazzar), the son of Shealtiel, descended from the royal house of David, a man well qualified for the great task. It must not be supposed, however, that the appeal was responded to by all classes of captive Jews alike; on the contrary, it was chiefly welcomed by the poorer people, while many of those who had found happy and prosperous homes in Babylon, hesitated to entrust their fortune to what they considered a hazardous enterprise, especially as they urged with apparent justice that they were merely to change their place of abode, but not their condition of dependence; that they were not to become a really free people with their own ruler and their own laws, but that they were destined to remain under the yoke of Persia, which they would feel in Jerusalem as much as in Babylon. Thus, as later Jewish writers expressed it, "the chaff" only returned to Palestine, while "the wheat" remained in Babylon. But there was in that small band of colonists a strength and a vitality which have outlasted for milleniums the vast empire of Persia.

153. THE BUILDING OF THE SECOND TEMPLE (536).

[Ezra III—VI.]

When the immigrants arrived in Palestine, they chose for their dwellings as far as they possibly could the towns and places which they or their ancestors had occupied before the captivity, while the priests and Levites took up their abodes throughout the territory of Judah, and especially in and around Jerusalem. They had been careful to reach their destination before the commencement of the rainy season, and they had fairly settled down towards the end of the summer. When, therefore, the seventh month of the Hebrew year approached, and with it the series of high festivals prescribed in the Pentateuch, they were anxious at once to testify their zeal by celebrating those sacred days in the ordained manner. "The people assembled together at Jerusalem as one man." By direction of Zerubbabel and of the priest Joshua (or Jeshua), the son of Jozadak, they erected a large altar, probably on the spot where the old one had stood in the Court of the destroyed Temple, and there they offered the sacrifices appointed for the Day of Memorial, the first of the seventh month, and for the Feast of Tabernacles; and there they continued regularly to present the daily holocausts every morning and every evening, the offerings for the days of the new-moon, and the free-will gifts of the people.

They were naturally most anxious to re-build the Temple of the Lord, which was once more to crown the height of Moriah. The great work was commenced, in the second year after the return (536), with intense fervour and earnestness. Money was liberally contributed by the chiefs, and by the

common people according to their means. As in the days of Solomon, well-paid Phoenician workmen were employed who, by permission of Cyrus, cut cedar-trees on Mount Lebanon, and drifted them along the shore down to Joppa, from whence they were brought to Jerusalem. The Levites above twenty years of age had the supervision of the whole work. At last the preparations were sufficiently advanced to allow of the foundation stone being laid. This ceremony was performed with the utmost solemnity. The priests dressed in their holy vestments, the Levites, the numerous singers, and all the people that had assembled from every part, burst forth to the sound of the trumpet and the cymbal in words of joy and thanksgiving: "Praise the Lord, because He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever toward Israel!" Among this joyous crowd was a group of aged priests and Levites, who had seen the first Temple as it stood in all its splendour and glory, the pride and delight of Judah. Their gaze was riveted upon the past, and they broke out into a loud wail of sorrow. But the shouts of glad rejoicing drowned the sounds of grief, and re-echoed among the hills of Judah.

Yet the noble work was soon to receive a serious check. It will be remembered that, when Shalmaneser made an end of the kingdom of Ephraim, and carried most of its inhabitants away to Assyria, he sent men from Persia and Media to occupy the conquered districts. The heathen settlers mingled with the comparatively few Israelites that had remained in the land; and this mixed race, dwelling chiefly in the province of Samaria, became known under the name of Samaritans or Cutheans *). It cannot be surprising that these Samaritans were looked upon with little favour by the Jews who had recently returned from Babylon. For

*) Men from Cutha were among the colonists sent by Shalmaneser to middle and northern Palestine (2 Kings XVII. 24); see p. 488.

supposing even that the Assyrians who were among them had renounced their idolatry and adopted the faith of the Hebrews, they formed so overwhelming a majority in the population, that the Jews, now more jealously watchful than ever for the purity of their race, would not recognise the so-called Samaritans as a people of Jewish descent. Thus were sown the seeds of an animosity almost without parallel in history for implacable violence. An occasion for open rupture was at hand.

When the Samaritans heard that the Jews had commenced to re-build the Temple, they sent this message to Zerubbabel and to the other chiefs: "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do, and we sacrifice to Him since the days of Esar-haddon, king of Assur, who brought us hither." But Zerubbabel sent back this answer: "You have nothing to do with us to build a House to our God; but we ourselves together will build to the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus, the king of Persia, has commanded us." Thus the hidden spark of bitterness was kindled into a blazing flame. The Samaritans, deeply wounded and hurt, determined to take their revenge by frustrating, if possible, the completion of the Temple. They sent a letter to Cyrus, pointing out, that it was by no means in his interest to allow the re-building of Jerusalem and the Temple, as the Jews, ever bent upon mutiny and rebellion, would then surely refuse the payment of taxes and imposts, and renounce their allegiance to Persia. The sinister letter had the desired effect. Cyrus interdicted the continuance of the work, which was suspended during the remainder of his reign as well as during that of his cruel successor Cambyses, down to the second year of Darius Hystaspis (520). However, this monarch, well disposed towards the Jews, repealed the prohibition of his predecessors, raised Daniel to a post of eminence, and granted new privileges to the

Jews, who at once resumed the long deferred task. Encouraged by watchful and ardent patriots, such as the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, they displayed a zeal which soon manifested itself by great results. The Persian satrap, seeing the rapid progress of the work, thought it his duty to report upon it to Darius, and to request his decision. The king, finding that an edict of Cyrus, issued in the first year of his reign, had authorised the restoration of the Temple, not only confirmed the permission, but commanded his satrap to supply the Jews with subsidies towards the building expenses from the public revenue, and to give them cattle for their national sacrifices, together with wheat and salt, wine and oil. When the messengers arrived in Jerusalem with this reply, fresh enthusiasm was roused, and the prophets repeating their admonitions whenever the people's zeal flagged, the work was perseveringly carried on.*)

At last, in the sixth year of Darius' reign (516), in the twelfth month (Adar), the holy edifice was completed. Of its size and structure we have no further description than these few details: "The height thereof was sixty cubits, and the breadth thereof sixty cubits: with three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber." It was probably built upon the same model as the first Temple, only of less costly and splendid materials. It wanted, moreover, not only the glittering porch hung round with its forty shields of gold, but, what was more important, the Ark of the Covenant with the tablets of the Law and the blooming staff of Aaron. Yet as it stood there, complete in all its parts, the Jews looked upon it with just pride, considering the difficulties under which the enterprise had been accomplished. It was dedicated with becoming solemnity and rejoicing, and with numerous sacrifices. The priests and Levites were installed in their various offices and functions in accordance with the Mosaic precepts. In the

*) See on the writings of Haggai and Zechariah in vol. II.

next month (Nisan), the feast of Passover was celebrated with feelings of deep gratitude for the important advance that had been made towards re-establishing a theocratic commonwealth.

154. THE HISTORY OF ESTHER.

[Book of Esther.]

During the long reign of Darius, the Jews, both those who had returned to Palestine, and those who had settled in the eastern countries, lived in peace and unmolested security. When Darius died (485), he was succeeded by his son Xerxes, whom we find mentioned in the Bible by the name of Ahasverus. According to Greek historians, Xerxes was a most unworthy successor of the great Cyrus: enervated by luxury from his youth, surrounded by base flatterers, immoderately vain of his tall and fair person, he was the type of the eastern despot, utterly regardless of everything but the gratification of his humour, whimsical, headstrong, fond of pomp and pageantry, yet cowardly and incapable of understanding heroism in others. Who can fail to recognise in the Ahasverus of the Book of Esther, the weak and capricious Xerxes of the Greek and Persian wars?

In the third year of his reign (482) — so relates the Book of Esther — Ahasverus, then residing in the royal capital of Susa, invited all his princes, nobles, and high officials to a splendid feast which was to last for one hundred and eighty days. At this banquet the wealth of the wealthiest of all ancient courts was gorgeously displayed. Afterwards the great king entertained for seven days all the people of Susa in the garden houses of his palace. The banqueting hall was hung round with curtains of various colours, fastened by means of cords and silver rings to

large marble pillars; the pavement consisted of marble and alabaster slabs, inlaid with pearls and tortoise-shells, and the couches upon which the guests reclined were of gold and silver. The choicest wines were abundantly supplied in drinking vessels of varied and exquisite design, and all of pure gold. At the same time, the queen Vashti gave a feast for all the women of her household. On the seventh day, Ahasverus, flushed and elated, sent for his queen, in defiance of all Eastern notions of propriety; for he wished to see how the people admired her beauty. Vashti shrank from leaving the seclusion of her own chambers and from appearing in public, and she declined to comply with the king's request. Ahasverus was enraged, and upon asking the counsel of his wise men, he was recommended to repudiate the disobedient Vashti, to dismiss her from his palace, and to choose a worthier queen; lest, said his advisers, other women should follow her refractory example, and there arise contempt and dissension in every household of the empire. This foolish advice was approved of by the king; the modest Vashti was discarded, and in order to assert the superiority of husbands over their wives, a decree was published throughout the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the Persian monarchy, that "every man should bear rule in his own house."

Not long afterwards, the attention of Xerxes was absorbed by his great expedition against the Greeks, rendered ever memorable by the battles of Thermopylae and Salamis, of Plataeae and Mycale (480 and 479). But after his return from this disastrous campaign, preparations were made for selecting a successor to Vashti. From all parts of his vast empire the most beautiful maidens were brought to the capital Susa, and from them the king was to make his choice. There lived at that time in the royal city a Jew of the name of Mordecai, who belonged to the tribe

of Benjamin, and whose family had, in the time of king Jehoiachin, been carried away to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Mordecai had adopted his orphan cousin, a maiden of surpassing beauty. Her Hebrew name was Hadassah (Myrtle), but by the Persians she was called Esther (Star). She was brought to the royal palace with the other young maidens, yet by Mordecai's injunction she concealed her Jewish origin. Her grace and beauty charmed Ahasverus; he chose her for his wife, placed the royal crown upon her head, and surrounded her with all the luxury and magnificence of a Persian queen (478). The marriage was celebrated with the lavish pomp and public festivities befitting the occasion.

Esther had not long been proclaimed queen, when Mordecai, who came daily into the court of the palace, discovered a conspiracy against the king's life, originated by two of his chamberlains; he revealed the plot to Esther, who in her turn related it to the king in Mordecai's name. The crime was proved, and the traitors suffered death upon the gallows. In accordance with custom, all these events were duly chronicled and preserved in the royal archives.

Amongst the courtiers of Ahasverus, Haman, probably a man of distinguished family, was a special favourite. He was raised high above all other officials, and a royal decree was issued that all the king's servants should prostrate themselves before him. Mordecai, who bowed down before God alone, firmly refused to comply with the edict. Haman, both vain and vindictive, was enraged, and when he learnt Mordecai's Hebrew descent, he resolved to take revenge not only upon him but upon his entire nation. Confident of his absolute influence over the weak king, he addressed him in these words: "There is a certain people scattered and isolated among the nations in all the provinces

of thy kingdom, and their laws are different from those of all people, nor do they keep the king's laws; therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed; and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the officers to bring it into the king's treasuries." Ahasverus took his signet ring from his finger, and giving it to Haman, said, "The silver is given to thee, and the people also, to do with them as seems good to thee." Then Haman summoned the king's scribes, and ordered them to write the decree in all the languages of the empire, and to send it out to the satraps of every province, bidding them: "Destroy, kill, and exterminate all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and take their wealth for a prey." The messengers went out, and the edict was published both in the capital Susa and in the other towns of the realm. "And in every province whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting and weeping and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes." But "the king and Haman sat down to drink."

When Mordecai heard the terrible and fatal mandate, he rent his clothes, put on garments of mourning, and with a bitter cry of distress rushed through the city, till he came before the gate of the king's palace; within that gate none were permitted to enter except in festive attire. In the seclusion of her own palace, Esther had remained in ignorance of the impending doom of her countrymen. When she was told that Mordecai was sitting before the gate in sackcloth and ashes, she was full of anxiety, and sent to him one of her chamberlains with garments which she desired him to exchange for those he had on. When this request was refused, her alarm grew, and she sent again to learn the cause of his

affliction. Mordecai told the man all that had passed, bade him give to the queen a copy of the royal decree, and urge her present herself without delay before the king, and to implore his mercy for her people. Esther trembled at these words, for no one was allowed to approach the Persian monarch unbidden under penalty of death, and Ahasverus had not summoned her into his presence for thirty days: how could she venture to appear before him with her prayer? But Mordecai sent her this reply: "Think not within thyself, that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews. For if thou keepest quiet altogether at this time, help and deliverance will arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed; and who knows whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Then Esther, dismissing all doubts and fears, heroically resolved upon the perilous enterprise. "Go," she sent word to Mordecai, "assemble all Jews that are present in Susa, and fast for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day; I also and my maidens will fast, and so will I go to the king, though not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish." On the third day of the fast, Esther arrayed herself in her royal garbs, and appeared within the inner court of the king's palace. Ahasverus was seated upon his throne, facing the palace-gate, from whence he saw her approach. She knew full well that she had boldly trespassed the law, and she trembled with fear. But the king extended towards her the golden sceptre, which signified that she had obtained grace and pardon. Then she advanced to the steps of the throne and touched the sceptre, and Ahasverus asked, "What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? were it even half of the kingdom, it shall be given to thee." There was a natural hesitation, or rather a prudent discretion, in

Esther's answer; she did not then entreat for mercy to the Jews, but requested that the king, together with Haman, would come that day to the banquet which she had prepared for them. The demand was granted, and the same day the king and Haman were the guests of Esther. At the feast, Ahasverus asked his queen again to name her petition. Perhaps still unable to summon the necessary courage, or thinking that she was not yet sufficiently sure of the king's clemency, Esther merely begged of him and Haman to come to another banquet on the morrow. With a proud and elated heart, Haman left the king's presence. As he passed the royal gate, he saw how Mordecai sat there without moving at his approach; but he cared not to upbraid his enemy at that moment; his revenge was certain and near; for was he not the signal favourite of both Ahasverus and Esther? When he arrived at his house, he related to his wife Zeresh, his children, and his friends, how he had been specially honoured that day by the queen's favour, and how to-morrow he was again her bidden guest. "Yet," he continued, "all this is of no avail to me, as long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." Then his wife and his friends said to him, "Let a gallows be made fifty cubits high, and to-morrow speak to the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon; then go merrily with the king to the banquet." The advice pleased Haman, and he caused the gallows to be erected forthwith.

In that same night the king was restless and could not sleep. To while away the time, he commanded the chronicles of the realm to be read to him. There he found recorded, how Mordecai had saved his life from the conspiracy of two chamberlains, and he asked, "What honour and dignity has been done to Mordecai for this?" — "There has nothing been done for him," was the answer. And the king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman, agitated by his

hatred of Mordecai, was already in the palace, eager to obtain the king's permission to hang his enemy. At Ahasverus' command, Haman came before him, and was greeted with this question: "What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honour?" Now Haman thought in his heart, Upon whom should the king desire to confer distinctions more than upon myself? So he answered unhesitatingly, "For the man whom the king delights to honour — let the royal apparel be brought, which the king is wont to wear, and the horse that the king rides upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head. And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes that they may array the man withal whom the king delights to honour, and lead him on horseback through the streets of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour!" Then the king said to Haman, "Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate; let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken." Haman was compelled to do the king's bidding: when all was finished, he returned to his house sick at heart, and full of despair and mourning. He related what had happened to Zeresh his wife and to his friends, and they said with a true foreboding: "If Mordecai, before whom thou hast begun to fall, is of the seed of the Jews, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." While they were still speaking together, the king's servants came and hastened to take Haman to the banquet of queen Esther.

Again the king and Haman were sitting at the royal table, when Ahasverus asked for the third time, "What is thy petition, queen Esther? it shall be granted thee; and what is thy request? were it even to the half of the king-

dom, it shall be performed!" Esther felt that now, when the highest honours had been bestowed upon her relative Mordecai, the moment had come to speak; she took courage and said, "Oh king, let my life be given at my petition, and my people at my request. For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. And if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I should have been silent, although the enemy could not repay the king's damage." — "Who is he and where is he," Ahasverus burst forth in anger, "that durst presume in his heart to do so?" Esther replied, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman." Then Haman trembled before the king and the queen. As Ahasverus rushed out into the garden in a paroxysm of wrath, the miserable Haman fell on his knees before Esther. There he was found by Ahasverus who soon returned with his attendants. He was led away, and by the king's command hung upon the gallows he had raised for Mordecai.

Esther now confessed to the king, that she was Mordecai's cousin. Ahasverus sent at once for the man who had saved his life, installed him in Haman's place, and gave him, as the symbol of his high office, the signet ring which had been taken from the hand of his foe. Then Esther fell down on her knees before Ahasverus, and implored him with tears to revoke the sanguinary edict which had gone out against the Jews; "for," said she, "how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" But the decrees of the Persian kings were irrevocable; once issued they could not be changed. However, Ahasverus dispatched messengers in all haste to every province of the empire, bidding the Jews prepare to resist their enemies. This new proclamation, which filled the Jews with ecstacy and their enemies with apprehension, was eagerly acted upon, and the

thirteenth day of the month of Adar was one of fearful bloodshed throughout Persia. The Jews defended themselves so vigorously, that they slew 75,000 persons in the provinces and 800 in Susa. The ten sons of Haman were among the victims. Unfortunately Esther in the day of her triumph showed but little clemency to the fallen, and gave free play to the spirit of revenge which, in that age, appears unfortunately to have been a characteristic of all nations. Mordecai became the great favourite of the monarch, was dressed in the magnificent robes of a grand-vizier, and was laden with riches and honours.

From that time, the Jews kept the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month Adar with gladness and rejoicing, by sending mutual presents, and gifts to the poor, as a yearly commemoration of the lots (purim), which Haman had cast to ascertain the day most auspicious for the destruction of the Jews. This is the origin of the festival of Purim.

155. EZRA THE SCRIBE.

[Ezra VII sqq.]

In Jerusalem meanwhile the second High-priest Joiakim had died, and was succeeded by his son Eliashib, under whose supervision the fortifications of Jerusalem were commenced. The ever watchful Samaritans considered this a good opportunity for renewing their accusations against the Jews at the Persian court; but they seem to have met with little success. The death of Xerxes (465), or rather the accession to the throne of his son Artaxerxes I Longimanus, was an event of the greatest importance to the Jews, especially to those who were settled in their old Palestine homes. For the new king showed remarkable kindness to his Jewish subjects; and he gave permission to all who lived scattered in his eastern provinces, to return to Palestine.

Upwards of 1500 persons availed themselves of it. At the head of this new colony the king placed a man who had obtained his entire confidence, and who was destined to exercise a very decisive influence upon his own countrymen — Ezra, of priestly descent, who was learned in the Law and all the knowledge required for its interpretation, anxious to teach and to diffuse it, pious and godfearing. In the seventh year of Artaxerxes' reign (458), the emigrants set out from Susiana. They did not go empty-handed. They took with them much silver and gold and many costly vessels, which the king, and his nobles, and the wealthy Jews of Persia, gave them for the Temple of Jerusalem*). What was more important, they came armed with a royal decree enjoining upon the satraps west of the Jordan to deliver to Ezra whatever he might require up to 100 talents of silver, and 100 measures of wheat, of wine, and of oil. By that same decree, the priests, the Levites, and all ministers and servants of the Temple, were for ever exempted from paying any of the taxes levied upon Persian subjects; and Ezra was commanded to select competent judges for all tribunals, and to appoint efficient teachers of the Law for the whole people. The edict concluded with these words: "And whosoever will not do the Law of thy God and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment." After a journey of four months, through districts full of rapacious and warlike tribes, the Jews arrived safely in Jerusalem, without having required any military protection. Ezra gave up all the treasures he had brought with him to the officials of the Temple, and delivered the king's commands

*) Namely, 100 talents of gold, 650 talents of silver, 100 talents worth of silver vessels, and 20 golden goblets worth 1000 darikes, and 2 vessels of shining brass of equal value as gold (Ezra VIII. 26, 27).

to the Persian satraps and governors, who readily afforded the Jews all necessary aid and support.

Ezra's first and principal care was to examine how far the Jews of Palestine lived in accordance with the Mosaic precepts, and to secure the purity of their faith. He found that they had flagrantly violated one of their most important laws; they had largely intermarried with surrounding nations; they had taken as wives maidens of the Canaanites and Amorites, of Ammon, Moab, and Egypt; and among those who had thus sinned were even priests, Levites, and chiefs. When Ezra learnt the extent of the offence, he was seized with violent grief. At the time of the evening sacrifice, he went to the Temple, and falling upon his knees, he implored the Lord most devoutly with tears and lamentations to pardon the trespasses of His people, concluding with these words: "O Lord God of Israel, Thou art righteous; for we are preserved and have escaped as it is this day: behold, we are before Thee in our trespasses; for no one can stand before Thee because of this." Soon a large concourse of men and women were gathered around him; all felt shame and repentance, and one among them, Sechaniah, the son of Elam, gave expression to the common feeling: "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land; yet there is still hope for Israel in this thing. Let us make a covenant with our God, to put away all the strange wives and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord (Ezra), and of those that fear the commandments of our God; and let it be done according to the Law. Arise! for this matter belongs to thee; we also will be with thee: be of good courage and do it."

Ezra caused at once the chiefs of the priests and of the people to swear that they would act in accordance with the words just heard, while he himself continued his acts

of penance and self-castigation. A decree was then sent out through the land, commanding the Jews under heavy penalties and expulsion from the Jewish community, to assemble within three days at Jerusalem. The people obeyed, and a vast crowd filled the open place before the Temple. It was in the latter part of the ninth month (Kislev), in the inclement season of the year, and the rain streamed down continually. Then Ezra stood up, pointed out once more the guilt of the people, and repeated his warning and admonition. The community promised again obedience. And now the task was earnestly begun, and in three months it was completed: all the foreign wives were dismissed, and the holy community was purified — "the most striking example of the change wrought in them, of the strong, stern passion that their religion had become; the great measure which drew the iron line of separation between the Jews and the rest of the world*)."

If we except a few later allusions, we have no other Biblical accounts concerning Ezra and his work; it is not even recorded where and when he died. Tradition, as may be expected, busily filled up the gap. According to some, he died and was buried in Jerusalem; according to others, he returned to Persia where he died 120 years old, and where his tomb was shown many centuries later near the river Flamura. A grateful posterity credited him with the most varied and most important services done to the sacred literature of the Jews. He may indeed be the author of most of the portions of the Biblical Book which bears his name; but he was supposed to have been the first who prepared accurate copies of the Law, and to have written down from memory all the Books of the Old Testament that had been lost or destroyed during the siege and capture of Jerusalem; nay

*) Milman, loc. cit.

to him, as the chief of the great Sanhedrin, were attributed the final compilation and revision of the Hebrew canon — a tradition refuted by the date of a considerable number of Books written after his time. He is said, moreover, to have introduced the Assyrian or Chaldee square letters instead of the older Phoenician characters. So much at least we may safely affirm, that Ezra's zeal, patriotism, and ability were of decided influence in familiarising the Jewish people with the Mosaic ordinances, and in creating that peculiar nationality which has withstood the persecutions and trials of thousands of years.

156. NEHEMIAH (444).

[Nehem. I. sqq.]

Ezra was more active as a religious than as a political or civil leader. His attention was directed to the theocracy rather than to the commonwealth, more to the Temple than to the capital or the country. Indeed the powers with which he had been invested by the Persian king, seem to have been circumscribed in that sense; he never attempted to carry forward the building of the walls and the city of Jerusalem. But soon a favourable change took place in this respect also. The man who effected it was Nehemiah, the son of Hachaliah, probably of priestly descent. By fidelity and intelligence he gained the entire confidence of the Persian king Artaxerxes, who appointed him his cupbearer in the palace of Susa. But in the midst of his honours, the destinies of his distant brethren who lived on the soil of their ancestors, were constantly before his mind.

It was in the twentieth year of the king's reign (445), that some men who had visited Jerusalem returned to Susa. Nehemiah questioned them anxiously about the wel-

fare of the colony and the state of Jerusalem; and he received this reply: "The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire." Nehemiah was overwhelmed with grief; he pictured to himself how defenceless the position of the Jews must be, how open to hostile attacks, how utterly helpless in times of danger. He wept and fasted and sought relief in ardent prayer: "O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, . . . let Thy ear now be attentive and Thy eyes open that Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee day and night for the children of Israel . . . We have acted very wickedly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which Thou hast commanded Thy servant Moses . . . Prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant this day, and grant him mercy." Thus strengthened, Nehemiah devised means for helping his brethren, and determined to appeal to his royal master. He was pouring out the wine as usual, when the king noticed that he had lost his customary cheerfulness, and asked him with kindly interest, "Why is thy countenance sad? thou art not ill?" Then Nehemiah answered, "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lies waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" The king asked what it was he desired; and now Nehemiah told him his plan. He begged of the king to send him to Jerusalem, that he might rebuild it; to give him letters to the governors and satraps in the west of the Jordan, ordering them to protect him in his journey; and to command the keeper of the royal forests to supply him with whatever timber he might require for the Temple and the city. The king granted his requests, merely stipulating that he should return to Susa within a fixed time.

So Nehemiah went forth, the appointed governor of Judea, accompanied by a royal guard. He performed his journey in safety. When the Samaritans, whose animosity against the Jews had not abated, heard that he had arrived in Palestine invested with important powers and privileges, they were unable to restrain expressions of bitterness and envy. Conspicuous for his hostility was Sanballat the Horonite. After resting three days in Jerusalem, Nehemiah rose in the night, and with a few chosen friends he rode unobserved round the silent and mournful city, whose ruin and sad decay he witnessed in that lonely hour. There stood the remnants of the walls, broken and battered, defenceless indeed, for the strong watch-towers had disappeared, and the gates had been burnt by fire, while many streets were so choked with rubbish and rotten timber, that there was no room for a mule to pass.

When the morning dawned, Nehemiah assembled the priests, rulers, and nobles, and said to them, "You see the distress that we are in . . . Come let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we may be no more a reproach." Then he told them that God had been merciful to him in the land of the Persians, and that Artaxerxes had granted permission and aid to carry out the work. Incited by his enthusiasm, they cried, "Let us rise up and build!" When Sanballat and many others equally ill disposed against the Jews heard of this enterprise, they laughed it to scorn, and said, "What is this thing that you will do? will you rebel against the king?" Nehemiah answered firmly, "The God of heaven will prosper us, and we, His servants, will arise and build; but you have no portion nor right nor memorial in Jerusalem."

The labourers were ready and the work was at once commenced. Eliashib the Highpriest and the priests under him set the example; they built and sanctified the first gate;

then the whole population of Jerusalem and many men from all the surrounding cities followed; gate after gate sprang up, the breaches in the wall were quickly repaired, and soon half the town was again enclosed and protected. When the Samaritans saw the walls of Jerusalem actually rise from the ruins, they could hardly control their rage. "What do these feeble Jews begin!" exclaimed Sanballat; "will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they finish it soon? will they revive the burnt stones out of the heaps of rubbish?" And Tobiah the Ammonite said, "They build indeed! If a fox went up, he would break down their stone-wall!" Yet in spite of the scoffing jeers and the menaces of the opponents, the enterprise was vigorously proceeded with. Nehemiah had been informed that the enemies, including Ammonites, Arabs, and Philistines, besides the Samaritans, contemplated a sudden attack. He, therefore, set a watch against them by day and by night, and when danger seemed imminent, he armed the population with spears, swords, and bows, placed the men behind the walls, and addressed them with inspiring words like these: "Be not afraid of them; remember, the Lord is great and terrible; and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives and your houses!" When the adversaries heard that the Jews were fully prepared to meet them, they desisted for a time from their schemes and retreated. But thenceforth Nehemiah cautiously divided his men into two bands — the one to serve as labourers, the others as soldiers; but even the former were armed while engaged in their task: "with one hand each of them wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon, ... and his sword was girded by his side." A trumpeter stood ready to blow the alarm when peril threatened, and thus to assemble the scattered workmen. All were lodged in Jerusalem, so as to be near at hand night or day,

if their aid should be required by any emergency. Nehemiah himself, his servants, and the men of his guard, slept dressed during all this time.

At last, in the incredibly short time of fifty-two days, the wall round the city stood completed. All acknowledged that so unexpected and so happy a result was mainly owing to Nehemiah's untiring zeal, who had not only guided and protected the workmen, but had personally aided in the great work together with his officers and servants. Upon him, therefore, all eyes were directed for redress from the many evils that had crept into the new community. Among these evils the most unbearable was the hard rapacity by which the richer Jews ground down their poorer brethren. The sufferers, full of trust in Nehemiah's justice, wisdom, and influence, laid before him their complaints and their burdens: "We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn because of the dearth. We have borrowed money for the king's tribute upon our lands and vineyards; ... and lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought into bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and our vineyards." Nehemiah's anger and compassion were roused; he summoned the rich and the nobles before him, and thus inveighed against them: "You exact usury, every one of his brother ... We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, who were sold to the heathen; and will you even sell your brethren? or shall they sell themselves to us?" Seeing that he had moved the hearts and consciences of his hearers, he continued: "It is not good that you do; ought you not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen nations, our enemies? I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, have lent them money and corn; I pray you, let us remit them this

loan. Restore to them, I pray you, even this day their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses; also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil that you have exacted of them as interest." The effect was complete, and all exclaimed, "We will restore it to them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest." An oath and a solemn adjuration ratified this earnest promise. Nehemiah himself set the example in all deeds of self-denial and patriotic sacrifice; with royal munificence he daily entertained at his table a hundred and fifty of the most distinguished Jews, besides providing for many strangers; and yet he renounced, during the whole time of his governorship, most of the emoluments which appertained to his high office, and which his predecessors had rigorously demanded; he renounced them, because he saw "that the burdens were heavy upon the people."

The more the work of the Jews prospered, the more violent became the hatred of the Samaritans. When Sanballat and his friends heard that the building of the walls had been brought to a successful issue, and when they found that they could not prevail by open attacks, they determined to gain their object by cunning and treachery. Therefore, they invited Nehemiah to an interview in the valley of Ono near Joppa; but Nehemiah, suspecting their sinister designs, declined the request on the plea that his presence was necessary in Jerusalem for the supervision of the works in progress. Four times the same invitation was repeated and each time it was refused. At last Sanballat sent Nehemiah a letter containing these words: "It is reported among the nations, that thou and the Jews think to rebel; for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now it will be reported to the king according to these

words. Come now, therefore, and let us take counsel together." Nehemiah, too well aware of his enemy's craft and baseness, boldly replied, "There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thy own heart." Yet Sanballat did not desist from his plots. He bribed a Jew, Shemaiah, the son of Delaiah, who, pretending to be most anxious about Nehemiah's safety, urged him to flee into the Holy or Holy of Holies of the Temple, and to bar its gates, as assassins were hired to kill him that very night. Nehemiah saw that this was a stratagem to entrap him into the profanation of the Sanctuary, and thereby to undermine his authority in the eyes of the fanatic people. He therefore answered Shemaiah, "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there that, being as I am, would go into the Temple to save his life? I will not go in." Thus, in spite of inveterate foes from without and lying prophets from within, in spite of traitors among the men of Judah, who were in secret alliance with the Samaritans, Nehemiah at last disarmed enmity, and succeeded in accomplishing his great and self-imposed tasks.

He gave to his brother Hanani and to his faithful friend Hananiah the supervision of the town and the walls. He ordered that the gates should only be opened during a part of the day, and that they should always be well watched and efficiently garrisoned. He intended completely to re-build the town, which at that time consisted mainly of an outer fortified wall; for many of the houses were still lying in ruins, and the people lived, not unlike nomads, in their tents or in lightly constructed dwellings, grouped round the foot of their only treasure — the Temple.

On the first day of the seventh month Tishri, at the beginning of the civil year, a vast concourse of people that had arrived from all parts of Judea, assembled at the dawn of morning before one of the gates of the city, and demanded

that "the Book of the Law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel" should be read to them. Ezra, though now a subordinate to his younger colleague Nehemiah, was still in Jerusalem, and worked as actively as ever for the dissemination of the Law. To him, therefore, the request of the people was specially and properly addressed. Standing upon a high wooden pulpit erected for the purpose, he unfurled the sacred scroll, and as he did so, he solemnly blessed the Lord, whereupon all the people answered Amen, Amen, and prostrated themselves worshipping upon the ground. Then Ezra read to the eager multitude from morn until midday, while able assistants, learned in the Law, mostly priests and Levites, gave all necessary explanations of the text. The people, comparing the Divine commands with their own sinful lives, burst forth in tears. But Nehemiah and Ezra exclaimed, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep; go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions to those who have nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord; nor distress yourselves; for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

On the next day, the chiefs of the families, the priests, and Levites, assembled again as before; then Ezra bid them enjoin upon the people to keep the Feast of Tabernacles as prescribed by the Law of Moses. "Go forth to the mount," he said, "and fetch branches of the olive tree, and of the wild olive tree, and of the myrtle, and of the palm-tree, and of thick-leaved trees to make tabernacles as it is written." The branches were duly gathered, and the frail booths, redolent of the sweet freshness of hill and valley, rose all over Jerusalem, on the roofs and in the yards of houses, in the vast Courts of the Temple, and before the gates of the city. The whole people kept the festival with rejoicings, while on each of the seven days portions of the Law were publicly read; a solemn assembly on the eighth day concluded the celebration of the Feast.

The twenty-fourth day of the same month was observed by the people as a day of fasting and penitence; reading of the Law alternated with the confession of sins; then the Levites prayed aloud for the community, extolling the mercy and goodness of God and imploring His forgiveness; they reviewed the long and eventful history of the Israelites from the earliest times up to their own days which they described in no cheerful colours: "Behold we are servants at present; and as to the land that Thou gavest to our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold we are servants in it; and it yields much wealth to the kings whom Thou hast set over us because of our sins; and they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress." The proceedings of that memorable day were brought to a close by a solemn covenant concluded by the people with God and ratified by an oath, that they would observe all the Divine laws, and especially that they would shun intermarriages with heathen nations, avoid buying and selling on the Sabbath day and all festivals, and duly keep the seventh or Sabbath year as a year of release. It was ordained, moreover, that they should pay a regular tax to defray the expense of the public worship throughout the year; that they should bring the firstfruits of the earth and of the trees to the Temple, and give the tithes of all produce of the soil to the Levites, who, in their turn, were to give the tenth part of their income to the priests; and that, with regard to the firstborn of men and animals, they should act according to the injunctions of the Law.

Now, in order to distribute the population as equitably as possible over the whole land, it was decided, that the chiefs of the people should reside in Jerusalem, and besides them, one family out of ten, should be selected by lot; while the remainder were to take up their abode in other parts of the country. This proposal, willingly

adopted, was carried out with all possible fairness. Particular care was taken to retain in Jerusalem a sufficient number of priests and Levites for the service of the Temple, and to assign dwellings to the rest in the various districts of Judea. But all holy ministers were soon afterwards assembled in Jerusalem to assist at the dedication of the newly built walls, which was celebrated with imposing solemnity and great rejoicing.

At the end of twelve years (432), Nehemiah, true to his promise, returned to the Persian court. Left without his watchful supervision, the Jews soon relapsed into many of their old abuses, the more so as Ezra seems either to have accompanied him to Susa, or to have died at Jerusalem before his departure. They admitted Ammonites and Moabites into their community. They intermarried again with heathen nations, and in many cases their children were not taught to speak Hebrew, but only the language of their pagan neighbours. Manasseh, the Highpriest Eliashib's grandson, had married a daughter of Sanballat, a chief of the Samaritans; and Tobiah, another powerful enemy of the Jews, had allied himself by marriage with a distinguished Jewish family, and had even a chamber prepared for him in the very Court of the Temple. The Levites and the singers did not receive their appointed portions, and therefore went to the fields instead of attending to their sacred offices. It seems that wise patriots were not wanting who saw and appreciated the danger of all these transgressions. The last of the prophets, Malachi, raised his voice in tones of warning and reproof, of comfort and encouragement, but with little effect*).

When Nehemiah, some years after his return to Susa, was informed of the confusion that prevailed in Judea, he was deeply grieved, and begged of his sovereign to allow him to visit Jerusalem once more (about 424). He obtained the

*) See the chapter on Malachi in vol. II.

desired permission, and as soon as he arrived in the holy city, he proceeded to remedy the evils that had so rapidly spread. He separated the Jews from all strangers, and forced them to dismiss their foreign wives; he acted in this matter with great decision, if not with violence; for, to quote his own words, "I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons or for yourselves." He banished Manasseh, who had so recklessly defiled the priesthood by his Samaritan marriage; and he expelled Tobiah from the Court of the Temple. He took measures that the Levites should again receive the tithes regularly and faithfully. But he did more. He eagerly and searchingly investigated the customs and daily life of the people. He found "in Judah some treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses, and also carrying wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens... There dwelt men of Tyre also in Jerusalem who brought fish and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath to the children of Judah and in Jerusalem." He severely reproved the chiefs of the people, saying, "What evil thing is this that you do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers act thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us and upon this city? Yet you call down more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

He commanded that the gates of Jerusalem should be closed on the eve of the day of rest, and should remain so till the following night. This measure he carried out with such energy and perseverance that he at last gained the desired object. Indeed Nehemiah's influence upon the religious and political consolidation of the Jewish community cannot be too highly valued; he worthily continued what Ezra had be-

gun; he was equal to his great predecessor in his love for his people, in his fervour for the purity of their faith, and in his untiring activity; but he surpassed him in promptitude and decision, and above all, in practical genius and administrative ability. To win our admiration, therefore, he does not require the legendary embellishments which tradition has wreathed round his name. According to this tradition, he is said to have re-discovered and made available the sacred fire which the priests, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, had hidden in a cavern, and which was thenceforth used for the altar; and he is reported to have brought together many books, and collected the works and letters of the kings and prophets, especially those relating to the donations made for the Temple*).

It is sufficient to know that he left us, in the Biblical Book which bears his name, a faithful and a clear account of his own share in the re-organisation of the Jewish commonwealth.

Here the historical accounts of the Hebrew Canon close. From the time of Nehemiah to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, our principal source is the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who is not always trustworthy, and must be followed with caution. As the object of the present work is not a History of the Jews, but a History of the Bible, we shall confine ourselves to a rapid sketch of the destinies of the Jews from the end of the fifth century, but shall narrate more fully the memorable Maccabean wars, after which we shall conclude with a brief survey of events down to the final overthrow of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews

*) See 2 Maccab. I. 18 sqq.; II. 13.

157. POLITICAL CONDITION AND LITERATURE.

Sanballat, to avenge the affront offered by Nehemiah to his son-in-law Manasseh (p. 565), built on Mount Gerizim a Temple similar to that of Jerusalem, introduced the Mosaic institutions in Samaria, and appointed Manasseh the first High-priest (414)*).

This was an event of the utmost importance; it perpetuated the political division between the Jews and Samaritans, and the two Temples, though devoted to the same faith, stood opposed to each other in hostile rivalry.

In the year 400, the Jewish High-priest Jojada died, and was succeeded by his son Johanan. But a younger and ambitious son, Joshua, aspired to the eminent dignity, and he was supported in his pretensions by the Persian governor Bagoses. In the Temple, he once insulted and provoked his elder brother, who, in a moment of fierce rage, killed him in the holy place. To chastise the Jews, Bagoses polluted their Temple by forcing his way into it, and imposed upon them a heavy tribute during seven years.

The next High-priests were Johanan's son and grandson, Jonathan and Jaddua, the latter a contemporary of Alexander the Great (330). During this time, the Jews were actively engaged in improving their civil organisation, and in gathering, arranging, and revising their literature.

The civil organisation was briefly as follows. The head of the nation was the High-priest; his office was for life and hereditary; and his dignity as spiritual chief and representative of the people was one of the highest distinction. The second great power in the commonwealth was a senate or council of seventy elders assembled in Jerusalem, called the Sanhedrin, the origin of which is by tradition traced back to

*) Josephus (Antiq. XI. VIII. 2) places this fact in the time of Alexander the Great (332).

the time of Moses. It was the legislative assembly, the highest administrative body, and the supreme court of justice, to which all appeals were brought from the lower courts; its decisions were final, and it had the privilege of granting pardon. Its members were required to be strict in their religious observances, learned in the Law, and well versed in the history of their people. The head or president was called *Nasi* or prince. If any of the members died, their places were filled up by some of their most distinguished disciples, who were permitted to be present at the deliberations of the council; and thus gained a practical knowledge of its business and duties. Presided over by the High-priest and Sanhedrin, the people, grouped in families, enjoyed full personal freedom and complete equality before the law, in accordance with the ordinances of the Pentateuch, which were now scrupulously adhered to and carried out.

The Jewish state was thus indeed a hierarchy, but at the same time it combined the elements of a monarchy in the High-priesthood, of an aristocracy in the Sanhedrin, and of a democracy in the well protected liberties of the people. All interests and all classes were represented and had their due share of influence. So salutary and well-balanced was this constitution, that the little community grew rapidly in strength, and could, at no distant period, even venture upon a struggle with a vastly superior power.

The service of the Temple with its sacrifices and other rites, was not only restored, but in many respects enlarged; and in addition to it, private houses of prayer, or Synagogues, which had sprung up during the exile, became places of religious teaching, centres of national union, and powerful means of strengthening and extending the ceremonial law.

The literature of this period was mainly of a religious tendency. Secular works were sparingly written, and as a

rule excluded from the national collections. Therefore, an immense number of such productions were lost, while the care of the learned was chiefly bestowed upon the interpretation of the sacred books, and upon developing that tradition or "oral law", which was considered to date from Moses himself, and to have been handed down from generation to generation. But unfortunately even many works which came fairly within the scope of religious writings, were not incorporated in the Canon, probably because, in the confusion and troubles of the exile, they were lost or difficult to obtain. We find in the Old Testament itself distinct allusion made to no less than fourteen such works, many of them evidently of considerable extent, while every one would have been an invaluable aid for supplementing the fragmentary records we possess, and for procuring to us a more complete insight into the remarkable history of the Hebrews, both political and religious, than we can ever hope to obtain from our present imperfect sources. Among those works, to which reference is made, some are poetical, as "the Book of the Wars of the Lord" and "the Book of the Righteous", both of which seem to have been collections of national songs intended to glorify deeds of valour and heroism; some historical, as the "Book of the Acts of Samuel", the "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" and "the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah"; while many are prophetic or at least written by prophets, as "the Book of Nathan the Prophet", "the Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite", "the Visions of Iddo the seer", and "the Book of Shemaiah the prophet." Who can estimate the value of the treasures of which we have thus for ever been deprived! Gradually, though not within centuries after the time of the last-named High-priests, the four and twenty Books which compose the Hebrew Canon, were finally compiled and revised, and then diffused, in many and scrupu-

lously accurate copies, as the inspired Word of God or the Holy Scriptures. (See pp. 1, 2.)

158. THE APOCRYPHA.

Yet the literary activity of the Jews, so far from ceasing, became more intense than ever. The canonical Books were indeed looked upon as the basis of all later writings, as the unerring standard for all future authors; but a vast field was left for unfolding the germs of the inspired teaching, and for embellishing and enlarging the inspired narratives. Thus, it is true, original genius became more rare and more feeble, and at last all but vanished; and the prophets of old were replaced by a new class of men, the scholars or "scribes", of whom Ezra seems to have been the first, or is at least the most perfect representative. Now all the works written or disseminated after the conclusion of the Hebrew Canon, and deemed, though not decisive in matters of doctrine and faith, yet beneficial for religion and spiritual guidance, were, from time to time, added to the Scriptures, by way of supplement, as distinct indeed from those older Books in weight and authority, yet recommended as profitable reading. They were comprehended under the name of *Apocrypha*, of which a small number has been preserved.*) That Greek word means literally "secret, hidden, or obscure," and was fitly applied to writings uncertain in origin, limited in circulation, and often vague in meaning.

*) Namely — the first and second Book of Esdras; Tobit and Judith; Additions to the Book of Esther; the Prayer of Manasseh; the Wisdom of Solomon, and the Wisdom of Jesus Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus); the Book of Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah; the History of Susanna, the Prayer of Azariah, the Song of the Three Holy Children, and the History of the Destruction of Bel and the Dragon; the (4) Books of the Maccabees; and another Book of Esdras. The order in which the Apocrypha are here enumerated is that in which the Septuagint translation inserts them after the various Books of the Old Testament (see *infra*). Some less known, though partially very curious works are omitted in this list; as the Book of Enoch, the Ascension of Moses, etc.

The Apocrypha were thus clearly opposed to the Books of the *Canon*, which signifies *rule* or *norm*. They remained restricted to private perusal, while the canonical writings were publicly read, and commented upon in the Temples and the Synagogues. Only a few of them were originally written in the holy tongue*); the rest were composed in Greek. This circumstance is significant in more than one respect. However eagerly the Jews tried to keep themselves distinct from other nations, they could not long shut out foreign influence. The Egyptian Jews especially, who formed a very large colony in Alexandria, the very centre of Eastern commerce and Grecian culture, became acquainted with the Greek language, and with Greek literature and thought; the latter — especially the views and theories of Plato — they endeavoured, by allegorical explanations of the Bible, to harmonise as much as possible with the principles of their own faith, and thus they gradually formed a new philosophical system known as that of the Jewish Alexandrian school, of which the most conspicuous representative is the great Philo. Thus living surrounded by Greek elements, the Egyptian Jews soon forgot the Hebrew tongue, and when Ptolemy II. (Philadelphus) desired to incorporate in his famous library the sacred writings of the Hebrews (283), he was obliged to send to Jerusalem for competent translators, who began the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the *Septuagint*. This translation, gradually completed (about 150), was then used not only by the Israelites of Egypt, but later by many others unfamiliar with the sacred tongue; and it was from time to time enlarged by apocryphal books inserted after portions which seemed to treat of kindred subjects.

*) Namely, the Books of Esdras (except ch. III and IV of the First Book), Jesus Sirach, the First Book of the Maccabees, the greater part of Baruch, Judith, and perhaps Tobit.

These Apocryphal writings, though unequal in value, include some works well worthy of a place in the Biblical Canon; and if so beautiful a collection of moral precepts as the Wisdom of Sirach, and an historical account so admirable as the First Book of the Maccabees, were not embodied in the Scriptures, it was merely because those works were either not written or not sufficiently known, when the Old Testament was concluded.

The author of one apocryphal Book only is known to us — Jesus, the son of Sirach, of Jerusalem, who lived about the year 170 (B. C.). His grandson, probably of the same name, settled about 40 years later in Egypt, where he prepared with much care a Greek translation of Ecclesiasticus. This Book is, at the same time, probably the oldest of the Apocrypha; the others range between that date and the first Christian century. It would be of little advantage here to epitomise the historical writings of all the Apocrypha; they are, with the exceptions already referred to, either embellished or enlarged descriptions of Biblical scenes, or they are apparently so devoid of historical truth and even of probability, that they cannot help us to understand the real course of events.

XIV. THE JEWS UNDER MACEDONIAN, EGYPTIAN, AND SYRIAN RULE.

(332—164.)

159. THE TIME OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

(332—323.)

[*Joseph.* Antiqq. XI. VIII. 3—7.]

About a century after Nehemiah, the Persian empire succumbed to the impetuosity and ambition of a youthful hero, who suddenly appeared in the eastern world like a brilliant meteor, to vanish as suddenly. Alexander the Great carried out the plans which his father Philip, king of Macedon, had devised, and which a premature death by the hand of assassins had prevented him from accomplishing. Philip had raised the small and obscure kingdom of Macedon into a powerful state and had humbled Greece; Alexander made Macedon for ever glorious in the annals of history, and subjected all the countries of the East from the Nile to the Indus. His first great victory at the river Granicus (334), by which he gained the whole of Asia Minor, was followed by another no less important success at Issus in Cilicia (333). From thence he continued his victorious march eastward, and, turning to the south, resolved to invade Egypt. His way led him through Syria

and Phoenicia, where he met with the most determined resistance. He took Damascus and Sidon, and laid siege to Tyre. While this siege was progressing, he dispatched messengers to the Jewish High-priest Jaddua, with the request to send him without delay auxiliaries and provisions, and thenceforth to pay to him the tribute money which had hitherto been sent to the king of Persia. The High-priest declined to comply with this demand, pleading his oath of fidelity to the Persian monarch. Alexander angrily vowed that he would take his revenge. But the Samaritans, more prudent and more pliant, sent him a contingent of 7000 men, and declared their submission, and in return for this Alexander confirmed their privileges with respect to the Temple on Gerizim. After the capture of Tyre, he proceeded to Gaza, which he took; and from thence he advanced upon Jerusalem. Terror and dismay seized the inhabitants. The High-priest — so continues the legendary account — and the common priests, all in their sacred vestments, together with a large number of citizens in white garments, went out in procession to meet Alexander, and to offer him their allegiance. When the king saw the High-priest, with the holy name of God written on his mitre, his wrath suddenly relaxed, he saluted the High-priest, and adored the God of Israel. Asked by his wondering generals what could be the reason of this strange conduct, Alexander replied, that when still in Macedonia, he had seen in a vision a man attired exactly like the High-priest, who encouraged him to undertake the expedition against Asia, and promised him success. Then Alexander entered Jerusalem, went into the Temple, and offered sacrifices to God. He gave to the priesthood magnificent presents, allowed the Jews throughout his empire to live in accordance with their own laws, and remitted to them all taxes in the Sabbath-year. The Samaritans solicited and obtained the same privileges. Many

Jews enlisted in the Macedonian army. Leaving Palestine, Alexander entered and subdued Egypt, where he built the large city Alexandria, which soon became famous as the principal seat of Greek and Eastern learning.

160. EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN DOMINION. (323—164.)

[*Joseph.* Ant. XII. I—IV; 3 Macc. I; 2 Macc. III.]

At the death of Alexander his unwieldy empire collapsed, and was divided among his chief generals. Palestine was joined with Syria into one kingdom, under the satrapy of Antigonus. Yet the coast of Phoenicia and the wooded heights of Lebanon were for the rulers of Egypt points too important not to tempt their ambition and avarice. Therefore, soon afterwards, Ptolemy I Lagi, the satrap of Egypt, invaded Palestine, defeated Demetrius, the son of Antigonus, in a great battle at Gaza (312), took Jerusalem by entering the city on a Sabbath-day, when the unsuspecting Jews did not dare to offer resistance, and subjected Palestine. This event proved of the greatest importance to the future history of the Jews. For Ptolemy transplanted large numbers of them into Egypt, it is said above 100,000, who partly settled in Alexandria, where they soon formed nearly half of the population, and partly spread over Cyrene, Libya, and other districts of Africa. The Egyptian Jews, especially those of Alexandria, though eagerly imbibing the Greek learning by which they were surrounded, clung tenaciously to their ancestral laws and customs. On the whole, they had no reason to be dissatisfied with their lot; though occasionally subjected to cruel oppression, they were treated by most of the Egyptian monarchs with considera-

tion and even distinction; their sacred Books were, by the order of Ptolemy, translated into Greek; they were sometimes raised to high dignities, both in the army and at court; and they even received permission from king Ptolemy Philometor (180) to build a Temple for themselves in Leontopolis, and to erect at the eastern boundary of the land a Jewish town, which they called Onion. They stood under a self-chosen chief (ethnarch), who was also their supreme Judge, and who was supported by a senate or kind of Sanhedrin. Yet they never gave up their connection with their mother country. They contributed the usual imposts for the Temple and priesthood of Jerusalem, which city they still recognised as their religious capital. This constant intercourse between the Jews of Egypt and those of Palestine could not fail to exercise upon the latter also a perceptible influence. The elements of Greek culture and the works of Greek literature were imported into Palestine, where they soon found eager readers and ardent admirers; as everywhere else, the beauty of Greek art and the refinement of Greek thought worked their spell. Therefore, while the Egyptian Jews, more deeply imbued with this foreign civilisation, developed their own peculiar philosophy (p. 571), many of their brethren in Palestine adopted, to a considerable extent, Greek notions by which their own national faith was not immaterially tinctured. Yet a large number of Palestine Jews adhered rigidly to their traditional principles, excluded and vehemently denounced all foreign, especially Greek philosophy, and branded the study of it almost as apostasy. Thus the germs were laid of two distinct sects, which became soon arrayed against each other in hostile opposition — the severe Pharisees, and the innovating Sadducees.

Ptolemy Lagi did not enjoy long the possession of Palestine; for already in the year after his victory (311) Antigonus re-conquered it. Yet Ptolemy did not lose sight

of this coveted province; and ten years later (301), he wrested it again from the hands of his enemies after the great battle of Ipsus, when it remained united with Egypt for about a century (till 203).*)

The High-priest Jaddua had been succeeded by his son Onias I (331), in whose time the important events just related — the expedition of Alexander the Great and the wars of his generals — took place. During the term of office of the next High-priest Simon (about 300), no noteworthy event occurred. But during the rule of Eleazar (from 287), the Egyptian king Ptolemy II. (Philadelphus), induced by his learned librarian Demetrius Phalereus, granted liberty to all the captive Jews in his empire; then transmitting rich presents to Jerusalem, he requested Eleazar to send able men to Alexandria to translate the sacred Books of the Jews into Greek. Seventy competent scholars went to Egypt, where they were received and treated with due honour, and are said to have accomplished their task — the Septuagint version — in seventy-two days; but it is known that the work was only completed in the course of several generations. Eleazar was followed in the pontifical dignity by Manasseh (266), Onias II (239), and then by Simon II (226), surnamed the Just, a man highly revered by his contemporaries and extolled by later writers. Only to a priest of extraordinary merit this glowing description of Jesus Sirach could be applied: "He was as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon at its full, as the sun shining upon the Temple of the Most High, and as the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds, and as the flower of roses in the spring of the year, as lilies

*) The following Egyptian kings were masters of Judea: Ptolemy I Lagi (from 301, after the battle of Ipsus, to 284); Ptolemy II Philadelphus (284—246); Ptolemy III Euergetes (246—221); Ptolemy IV Philopator (221—204); and Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204-181).

by the rivers of water, and as the branches of the frankincense tree in the time of summer; as fire and incense in the censer, and as a vessel of beaten gold set with all manner of precious stones; and as a fair olive tree budding forth fruit, and as a cypress tree which grows up to the clouds. When he put on the robe of honour, and was clothed with the perfection of glory, when he went up to the holy altar, he made the garment of holiness honourable."

As might have been expected, the Syrian kings made repeated efforts to re-conquer Palestine, but they were unsuccessful; even Antiochus III, the Great, an energetic monarch and skilful general, was signally defeated in a great battle at Raphia by the Egyptian king Ptolemy IV Philopator (217). The latter, elated by his victory, and taking possession of many Syrian towns, went to Jerusalem, and wished to force his way into the Temple. In vain the Jews implored him to desist from his unholy purpose; the town was in consternation; the people and elders, the priests and the Highpriest Simon, all entreated God in fervent prayer to avert the profanation; but when Ptolemy was on the point of crossing the threshold of the Sanctuary, we are told that he was suddenly paralysed, and was carried away unconscious by his servants; and when he had recovered, he departed with vehement threats, which he partially carried into effect upon his Jewish subjects in Egypt. Yet Antiochus the Great did not abandon his schemes; and when Ptolemy Philopator was succeeded by Ptolemy Epiphanes, a child only five years old, the Syrian king, believing that a favourable opportunity had arrived, undertook a new campaign, and easily conquered Palestine, Phoenicia, and Coelosyria (203). Thus the Jews came under Syrian dominion. Antiochus

the Great was followed by Seleucus IV Philopator (187—176), and the High-priest Simon the Just by Onias III (197). The latter had an inveterate enemy, a certain Simon, a Benjamite, who went to the Syrian governor Apollonius, and told him that there were immense treasures in the Temple of Jerusalem, which he might acquire without any great difficulty. Apollonius repeated the words of Simon to his master Seleucus, who sent his treasurer Heliodorus to Jerusalem to obtain the money. The High-priest Onias, on hearing the request, replied that the gold and silver were chiefly the deposits of widows and orphans, or belonged to a private person Hyrcanus, the son of Tobias; moreover, the whole amount did not exceed 400 talents of silver and 200 talents of gold. Yet Heliodorus pressed his demand, and fixed a day when the treasures should be given up. Grief and anguish prevailed in Jerusalem, and people and priests humbled themselves in prayer and fasting. But when the Syrian officer was entering the sacred precincts with his numerous attendants, he is reported, like Ptolemy, to have suddenly been struck down. The Jews broke forth in loud praises of thanksgiving for the miracle, which had saved their Temple from pollution. Entreated by the Syrians, Onias prayed and offered up sacrifices for Heliodorus, who then, restored from his illness, returned to Syria, and thenceforth acknowledged and proclaimed the power of the God of Israel. But Onias was accused by his old enemy Simon before Apollonius of having insidiously ordered Heliodorus to be attacked and killed in the Temple. The High-priest deemed it necessary to proceed to the Syrian governor, whom he at last convinced of his innocence. Not long afterwards king Seleucus died, and he was followed by his son Antiochus IV, surnamed Epiphanes or

the Illustrious (176—164), whose reign was one of the most memorable in the history of the Jews.

161. THE HOSTILITIES OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES (176—167).

[2 Macc. IV, V; 1 Macc. I.]

Antiochus combined the love of magnificence and luxury peculiar to the Asiatic despot with the versatile activity of the Greek; but he was above all stubborn, reckless, and cruel. He entertained an ardent and almost fanatic enthusiasm for Greek religion, Greek art and poetry, and it was his ambition to convert his country into a second Hellas. He was determined to force Greek notions and habits upon all his subjects alike, whatever their race or creed. The Jews were the special objects of his proselytising zeal. The greater resistance they offered, the more obstinately he persevered in his plans. Treachery and disunion among the Jews themselves hastened a rebellion, which happily grew into a war of independence.

Joshua, the brother of Onias, coveted the dignity of High-priest, and in order to secure it, he offered Antiochus 440 talents, to which he promised to add the sum of 150 talents more, and requested the king's permission to establish in Jerusalem a gymnasium after the fashion of the Greeks, and a school for training young men in all bodily exercises. He obtained the royal sanction, usurped the High-priesthood under the Greek name of Jason, which he adopted to flatter Antiochus, and began at once to carry out his anti-Jewish measures. He built a gymnasium near the very mountains of Zion and Moriah, summoned the young men of the chief families to attend, and forced them to wear a hat of Hermes, the patron of the palaestra. He deprived

the citizens of their old privileges and of their well secured right of living in accordance with their national institutions. Grecian habits and Grecian worship became general in Jerusalem; the Temple and its service were neglected, and Jason went so far as to send 300 drachms of silver to Tyre, where the quinquennial games in honour of Hercules or Baal were celebrated, professedly as a contribution towards the building of ships, but in reality for the sacrifices of Hercules. Antiochus himself visited Jerusalem, where he was received with every demonstration of joy and loyalty.

Three years later, Jason sent Menelaus, the brother of the above mentioned Simon, to Antiochus with the promised money; Menelaus succeeded in winning the king's favour, offered him 300 talents more than Jason had paid, and thus basely obtained the High-priesthood for himself. Jason, fearing his unscrupulous rival, fled into the land of the Ammonites, whilst Menelaus entered Jerusalem in triumph. In order to pay the purchase money, he oppressed and heavily taxed the Jews; yet he failed to remit the stipulated sum to Antiochus. He was, therefore, commanded to appear before the king; and when he went, he left his brother Lysimachus behind to represent him as High-priest. In order to bribe the governor Andronicus, who stood in high favour with Antiochus, he took a number of holy vessels from the Temple, and presented them to the governor. Onias, escaping into the sacred city of Daphne near Antiochia, vehemently denounced that act of impious sacrilege, but on the instigation of Menelaus, Andronicus cunningly lured him from his safe retreat, and treacherously murdered him. A general cry of indignation rose both from Jews and Syrians against the perpetrator of the crime; Antiochus himself was revolted, and instantly ordered the execution of Andronicus. But Menelaus and

Lysimachus continuing in Jerusalem their deeds of oppression and plunder, the people broke out into rebellion, and Lysimachus was slain.

The elders of the Jews now went to Antiochus to accuse Menelaus of cruelty and lawlessness; the king saw and condemned his guilt and his crimes, yet by a bribed official he was persuaded to declare him innocent, to confirm his rights, and even to order the death of the elders. Many unoffending and faithful Jews were killed in Jerusalem, and Menelaus ruled as High-priest with fierce barbarity.

But Antiochus undertook a second expedition against Egypt, where Ptolemy VI Philometor was then reigning. Soon after his departure, the report of his death was spread. Jason, believing that now an opportunity had arrived for recovering his lost position, suddenly made an attack upon Jerusalem with a thousand men, and mercilessly cut down his Jewish brethren; yet he was compelled to retreat, and fled first to Arabia, from thence to Sparta, where in vain he raised claims of relationship, and finally to Egypt, where he died hated and friendless. A confused account of what had happened in Jerusalem came to the ears of Antiochus; believing that the Jews meditated rebellion, he hastened back from Egypt, causing a fearful slaughter in Judea, and especially in Jerusalem; and many Jews he sold as slaves. Led by the impious Menelaus himself, he entered the Temple, polluted the holy implements and vessels, and took away 1800 talents of silver. The Jews raised bitter cries of anguish and despair. The successful king returned to Antiochia, "meaning in his pride to make the land navigable, and the sea passable by foot; such was the haughtiness of his mind." He left behind him as governor in Jerusalem the cruel Phrygian Philippus, and as High-priest Menelaus, the worst enemy of his people. Soon afterwards he sent his general Apollonius with 22,000 men into Ju-

dea, giving him strict orders to kill all those who might become dangerous to his rule. Feigning peaceful designs, Apollonius attacked the defenceless Jews on a Sabbath-day, when they offered no resistance, and slew large numbers of them. He fortified Zion with a new wall and high towers, to serve as a well-garrisoned and well-stored Syrian stronghold against the Jewish people. And now followed religious persecutions unsurpassed in frenzy and bloodshed even during the darkest times of fanaticism; and atrocities were practised unknown in the days of Assyrian and Babylonian supremacy. It was the avowed object of Antiochus to compel the Jews to abandon the customs and the faith of their ancestors. The Books of the Law were rent and burnt. The Temple of Jerusalem was called the temple of Jupiter Olympius, and that on Gerizim the temple of Zeus Xenios, the defender of strangers, and in both of them were placed statues of the heathen gods. The precincts of the Temple were polluted by unholy revelries, and the Altars defiled by unclean meat, especially swine's flesh, and by detestable images of idolatry, in honour of which the first victims were slain on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month (Cislev) in the year 168. No sacrifices were permitted in accordance with the Law of Moses. Altars and temples of idols were erected in every street; and offerings were presented and incense rose before every house in honour of Hermes, Apollo, and Dionysus. Circumcision was rigidly forbidden, and mothers who had acted against this decree were hurled down the high wall, with their infants tied round their necks, while their houses were plundered, and those that had performed the rite punished with death. The people were forbidden to keep the Sabbath or any of their festivals; they were even warned not to call themselves Jews. On the other hand, they were forced to take part in the pagan sacrifices, and, wreathed with garlands of

ivy, to accompany the wild processions in honour of Bacchus. These acts of violence were extended to the Jews who were living in any of the Greek cities or islands. The towns of Judea were visited and searched by Syrian officers appointed to enforce the faithful execution of the king's edicts. Many Jews submitted, and sacrificed to the Syrian idols set up in every town. But those who refused to do so, or in whose possession was found a copy of the Law, were massacred. Large numbers fled from Jerusalem, and soon the town was almost deserted by its native inhabitants. Many who had taken refuge in neighbouring caves for the sake of keeping the Sabbath according to the Law, were surrounded and mercilessly burnt. Loud was the cry of despair which rang through the towns and provinces of Judah.

Yet oppression only strengthened in the hearts of many the firm determination to abide by their time-honoured observances, and to cling the more devotedly to their sacred faith. History has preserved to us some instances of heroic resistance, which will ever be admired and extolled. Eleazar, one of the principal scribes, an aged man, was to be forced to eat swine's flesh. But he refused, and boldly went to the torture. Even his persecutors felt pity, and they tried to persuade him, secretly to bring meat of his own choosing, and to substitute it for the swine's flesh. But he rejected the proposal. "It becomes not our age," said he, "in any wise to dissemble, whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar, being fourscore years old and ten, had now turned to a strange religion . . . Wherefore now manfully changing this life, I will show myself such a one as my age requires, and leave a notable example to those who are young, to die willingly and courageously for our honoured and holy laws." He then bravely submitted to the stripes, and died with these words: "I now endure sore

pains in body by being beaten, but in soul I am well content to suffer these things, because I fear God."

Even more remarkable is the account of a mother and her seven sons who were to be compelled to taste unlawful meat. They were punished with scourges and whips. Then the eldest son exclaimed, "What wouldest thou ask or learn of us? We are ready to die, rather than to transgress the laws of our fathers." The enraged king ordered his tongue, his hands, and his feet to be cut off before the eyes of his mother and his brothers, and himself to be thrown alive into a red-hot cauldron. He died with the praise of God on his lips, while his relations exhorted each other to firmness, and prayed to the Lord for courage in their impending trial. Five of the brothers were next subjected to tortures varied with fiendish cruelty, and then, upheld in their last moments of agony by their heroic mother, they suffered the death of martyrdom with equal resignation and in unshaken hope of a future reward. And now the youngest son alone remained. Antiochus, thinking it a disgrace to be so completely baffled, promised the youth honour and riches if he would forswear the Jewish faith; and then he bid the mother counsel her son to yield to his persuasion. But the lion-hearted woman laughed the tyrant to scorn, and bursting forth in her own Hebrew tongue, said to her son, "Fear not this tormentor, but being worthy of thy brothers, take thy death that I may receive thee again in mercy." The youth needed no admonition; turning to the Syrians, he cried, "Whom do you wait for? I will not obey the king's command, but I will obey the commandment of the Law that was given to our fathers by Moses." And then predicting a fearful fate to the wicked king, "he died undefiled, putting his whole trust in the Lord." Bereft of her children, the mother, last of all, suffered death for her faith without a murmur. But in this darkest hour of gloom and distress help was at hand.

162. MATTATHIAS (167).

[1 Macc. II; 2 Macc. VIII.]

There lived in Modin, a small town of Judah, a man of the name of Mattathias, faithful to the Law, and ready to sacrifice his life in its cause. He was of priestly descent and belonged to the family of the Asmoneans. He had five sons worthy of his own patriotism — Joannan surnamed Kaddis (the Pious), Simon called Tassi (the Counsellor), Judas or Maccabaeus (the Hammer), Eleazar or Avaran (the Wall-breaker), and Jonathan or Apphus (the Cunning). Mattathias was overwhelmed with grief by the acts of the Syrian tyrant, and he broke forth in a bitter lament: "Woe is me! wherefore was I born to see this misery of my people and of the holy city, and to dwell there, when it was delivered into the hand of the enemy, and the Sanctuary into the hand of strangers? The Temple is become as a man without glory, the holy vessels are carried away into captivity, the infants are slain in the streets, the young men with the sword of the enemy. What nation has not had a part in the kingdom, and taken of its spoils? . . . Of a free woman it is become a bondslave . . . To what end therefore shall we live any longer?"

He rent his garments and put on sackcloth, and his sons and friends mourned with him. About this time the king's commissioners, in their progress through the land, came to Modin, erected an altar, and ordered the people to sacrifice to the Syrian gods. They specially requested Mattathias, who stood in high respect among the people, to give the example, which they hoped would then be followed by others. The aged priest refused, and disdainfully declined all offers of wealth and distinction. Seeing one of the Jews

about to sacrifice, he rushed upon him, burning with anger, and slew him with his own hands. He then killed the king's principal messenger, and pulled down the altar, exclaiming in a loud voice, "Whoever is zealous of the Law and maintains the covenant, let him follow me!" This was the signal for revolt. Mattathias escaped from the city with his sons and a small number of his countrymen, and like David of old, they fled for refuge to the deserts of Judah: they went with their wives and their children, their flocks and their herds. But they were soon pursued by the king's soldiers, who attacked them on a Sabbath. Unwilling to fight on the sacred day of rest, they said, "Let us die all in our innocence; heaven and earth shall testify for us that you put us to death wrongfully." A large number of them were slain on that day. Then they resolved in future to oppose the enemy, if necessary, on the Sabbath also, lest they be all destroyed. And so they did when they were attacked again, and they gained a great victory. Many Jews now came flocking round the standard of Mattathias. He traversed the country at the head of his valiant band, encouraged the wavering, destroyed the heathen altars, and restored the old laws and institutions. When he felt that his death was approaching, he spoke to his sons words of inspiriting heroism: "Now, my sons, be zealous for the Law, and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers. Call to remembrance what acts our fathers did in their time; so shall you receive great honour and an everlasting name . . . Fear not then the words of a sinful man; for his glory shall be dung and worms. To-day he shall be lifted up, and to-morrow he shall not be found, because he is returned to his dust, and his thought is come to nothing . . . And, behold, I know that your brother Simon is a man of counsel, give ear to him always: he shall be a father to you. But as for Judas Maccabaeus, he has been mighty and strong, even from

his youth up: let him be your captain and fight the battle of the people." Then Mattathias blessed his sons and died (167), and he was buried in the grave of his ancestors at Modin, lamented by all Israel.

163. JUDAS MACCABAEUS THE DELIVERER. (167—164).

[1 Macc. III, IV; 2 Macc. VIII. 1—X. 8.]

All the sons of Mattathias did honour to his name, but none of them rivalled Judas in nobility of mind and intrepid heroism. He is one of the grandest figures in all history, and has bequeathed an imperishable glory to the annals of the Jews. He not only revived the best days of ancient valour and patriotism, but he shed around his nation a new lustre by his unequalled self-sacrifice. His life is undimmed by a single stain, and well might the old historian say of him: "He put on a breast-plate as a giant, and girt his warlike harness about him, and he made battles, protecting the hosts with his sword. In his acts he was like a lion, and like a lion's whelp roaring for his prey: for he pursued the wicked, and sought them out, and consumed those that vexed his people . . . His memory is blessed for ever."

Many men of valour, inflamed by the example of Judas, rallied round him, determined to save their country or to end their bondage by an honourable death. Under his leadership they swept through the land, restoring almost everywhere the ancestral worship. Then the Syrian governor Apollonius attacked Judas with a considerable army, but he was defeated and killed, and Judas took from him his sword, which he thenceforth wore in all his battles. To avenge the death of Apollonius, the Syrian general Seron advanced with a large host, and encamped at Bethhoron.

The Jewish soldiers trembled and desponded; but Judas addressed them in these words: "It is no hard matter for many to be shut up in the hands of a few; and with the God of heaven it is all one, to deliver with a great multitude or a small company: for the victory of battle stands not in the multitude of a host; but strength comes from heaven. They march against us in much pride and iniquity to destroy us and our wives and children, and to spoil us: but we fight for our lives and our laws. Wherefore the Lord Himself will overthrow them before our face: and as for you, be not afraid of them." — Then he rushed on against the enemy, killed 800 of them, and put to flight the rest, who for the most part escaped into the land of the Philistines.

The fame of Judas was now established, and he and his brothers were the recognised leaders of the faithful patriots against the foreign oppressors. Such prodigies of valour had not been achieved since the days of the Judges and the great kings of Israel. A noble enthusiasm stirred the people, and the whole country resounded to the din of war. Antiochus, stung by the discomfiture of his armies, determined upon the extirpation of the contemptibly small band which had dared to defy his power. He gathered an immense host, and paid the soldiers their hire for a year in advance. But so lavish and extravagant had he been, that he had exhausted his treasury, and in order to replenish it, he crossed the Euphrates with a well-equipped army to enforce tribute from the subjected nations. He left behind as governor of the land and of his young son Antiochus, Lysias, a man of royal descent, and entrusted to him half of the Syrian forces, with the strict injunction to fight against the rebellious Jews, utterly to destroy them, and to distribute their land among Syrian settlers. Lysias appointed Ptolemy, Nicanor, and Gorgias his gene-

rals, and dispatched them into Judea with 40,000 infantry and 7,000 cavalry. Reinforcements were sent by the Philistines and other old enemies of the Jews. So confident were the Syrians of victory that rich slave merchants accompanied the army with fetters for the captive Jews, ninety of whom were beforehand offered for one talent of silver. They encamped in the plain before Emmaus. But the Jews, hopeful and courageous, prepared for determined resistance. They did not assemble in Jerusalem, because this "lay desolate as a wilderness, the Sanctuary was trodden down, and aliens kept the stronghold," but they met for council in Mizpah, a holy place from the earliest time; and there they prayed and fasted and humbled themselves before God. Judas collected his men, about 3,000 in number, chose able captains, and when he arrived with his followers near Emmaus, he addressed them thus: "Arm yourselves and be valiant men, and see that you be in readiness against the morning, that you may fight with these nations that are assembled together against us to destroy us and our Sanctuary. For it is better for us to die in battle, than to behold the calamities of our people and our Sanctuary. Nevertheless as the will of God is in heaven, so let Him do." — The Syrian general Gorgias determined to attack the Jews at once; but these, led by Judas, left their camp secretly at night, surrounded the enemy, and, inspired by their leader, assailed them boldly, and spread among them such consternation that they wildly fled southward to Gaza and the plains of Idumea, to Ashdod and Jamnia. Three thousand of the heathens were killed. The Jewish soldiers were eager to seize and carry away the rich spoil that lay before them; but Judas checked them, for, he said, he knew that more fighting awaited them that very day; and indeed soon afterwards Gorgias appeared with fresh troops; but when these saw the Syrian camp in flames,

they also took flight, and escaped into the land of the Philistines. Joy and exultation prevailed among the Jews, and songs of praise rose to heaven. The booty was now taken and divided, and the Jewish army returned to Mizpah with increased self-reliance.

When Lysias heard of this double defeat of the magnificent Syrian armies, he feared the just anger of Antiochus; and he determined to undertake in the next year (165) a new expedition against the Jews. He collected 60,000 foot and 5,000 horse, and encamped at Beth-zur in Judah, the border fortress against Idumea. But Judas contrived to bring together 10,000 men, encouraged them by holding up for their imitation the example of their brave ancestors, and intrepidly marched against the enemy. Again victory followed his banners, and five thousand Syrians lay slain on the battle field. Lysias heard the tidings with pangs of grief, and yet he resolved to make another attempt against Judea in the following spring.

Judas and his army were now the masters of the land; they entered Jerusalem which was deserted and lay partly in ruins. They found "the Sanctuary desolate, the Altar profaned, the gates burnt up, shrubs growing in the Courts as on a mountain, whilst the chambers of the priests were pulled down."

But Judas zealously restored the desecrated Temple, purified it from all idols, and put the holy vessels in their appointed places. On the twenty-fifth day of Cislev in the year 164, the brazen altar was again dedicated, amidst the jubilant shouts of the people, and with numberless joy- and praise-offerings; and Judas ordained that, in commemoration of this happy event, a festival should for all future time be celebrated during eight days, to begin with the twenty-fifth of Cislev. This is the "Feast of Dedication" or

"Chanuka" which is still kept by the Jews with feelings of gratitude and gladness.

The Sanctuary itself was adorned with all possible splendour, and once again as in the days of David and Solomon, the porch glittered with crowns of gold and burnished shields.

XV. THE JEWS UNDER THE ASMONEANS.

(164—40.)

164. JUDAS MACCABAEUS THE RULER (164—161).

[1 Macc. V. 1—IX. 22; 2 Macc. X. 9—XV. 39.]

Judas did not remain long inactive; for, anxious to protect the land against its ever watchful enemies, he surrounded Mount Zion with high walls and strong towers, which he amply garrisoned; and he fortified Beth-zur as a safeguard against Idumea.

Alarmed and mortified by the irresistible progress of the Hebrew arms, the neighbouring nations resolved to massacre all the Jews who lived scattered within their territories. But Judas and his undaunted followers appeared everywhere to protect and deliver them. He first marched against the Idumeans in the province of Acrabattine, routed them, and plundered their country; then attacked Bajan on the southern boundaries of Palestine, and burnt the towers in which the people had taken refuge; and afterwards defeated the Ammonites in many battles, which they fought under their able general Timotheus, and conquered Jaezer and its colonies. When they had advanced so far, the

Jews of Gilead in the east of the Jordan, who had already suffered heavy losses in sanguinary battles, sent messengers to Judas urgently requesting speedy assistance, as a large number of them was kept enclosed in the fortress of Dathema. At the same time delegates from the Jews of northern Palestine arrived with the tidings that they were menaced with destruction by the powerful Phoenicians and the heathen Galileans. Judas turned no deaf ear to these entreaties, and he hastened to the rescue of his brethren. Dividing his army into three parts, he gave to his brother Simon 3000 men, and bade him fight against the northern enemies; he himself at the head of 8000 men, and accompanied by his brother Jonathan, marched out into Gilead, leaving two of his tried captains, Joseph and Azariah, in Judea, with the strict injunction not to engage in any battle during his absence. Simon was completely successful in Galilee; he gained many victories, thoroughly weakened his opponents, and brought numerous captives back with him to Jerusalem. When Judas, on his way to Gilead, passed through the territory of the Nabatheans, he obtained the assistance of this friendly tribe, and learned from them with burning indignation the revolting cruelties of the Gileadites. Guided by his new allies, he soon reached Dathema. Here the besiegers had already begun to scale the walls with ladders and engines of war. Judas at once sounded the trumpet for attack, and dividing his troops into three bands, he assailed the surprised and terrified enemies, and killed 8000 men; the rest fled with their general Timotheus. Then he advanced to Mizpah, Chasphor, Maked, and all the other hostile cities of Gilead; he was everywhere victorious, and took immense spoil. The brave Timotheus, however, not yet despairing of his fortune, collected a new and larger army, encamped at the river Arnon, opposite the town Raphon, and thus hoped to cut off the return of

the Hebrew army into the western provinces. But Judas followed Timotheus step by step, crossed the river intrepidly before the eyes of the amazed general, and drove the enemies from their camp as far as the fortress Karnaim, in which they shut themselves up for safety; but Judas ordered the city to be burnt down, and soldiers and people, perished in the flames. He then desired to return to Judea together with the Gileadite Jews whom he had delivered; his road necessarily led him through the town Ephron in the east of the Jordan, opposite Beth-shean or Scythopolis. He asked in friendly terms to be allowed to pass through the city; but when his request was insultingly refused, he assaulted the town impetuously, and took and pillaged it after a fearful carnage; then he crossed the Jordan and arrived at Beth-shean. When he and his valiant men at length re-entered Jerusalem, they were received with boundless rejoicing and exultation. Thank-offerings were presented in profusion to celebrate the marvellous succession of exploits and the unparalleledo victries of the great hero.

While Judas was in the east of the Jordan, Joseph and Azariah, stimulated by vanity and ambition, disregarded the rigid injunction of their leader, and ventured upon a warfare of their own. They went with their army southward towards Jamnia. Here they were met by the Syrian commander Gorgias, were repulsed, and lost 2000 men. Judas, while severely censuring his self-willed captains, would yet not allow their defeat to pass unavenged. He marched into the southern provinces, smote Hebron, which he wrested from the hands of the Edomites, destroyed fortresses, and burnt down towers. Then he passed like a scourge through the land of the Philistines and through Samaria, victorious at all points, destroying idols and hea-

then altars, and taking great spoil; until at last he went back into Judea.

Meanwhile Antiochus Epiphanes had penetrated eastward over the Tigris to the Persian districts of Elymais, where he hoped to plunder the rich temple treasures amassed by Alexander the Great; but he suffered frightful losses, and was compelled to retreat. Arriving in Ecbatana, he received the tidings of the numerous and complete discomfitures of his armies in Palestine. Frantic with rage and humiliation, and harassed by his own recent disappointments, he was attacked by the dangerous and loathsome illness of elephantiasis. His condition was aggravated by bitter remorse for the atrocious cruelties he had committed against the Jews, and for the spoliation of their Temple, which, in a letter full of humble contrition, he promised, on his return, to enrich with the most costly presents. But his dire disease made rapid progress, and tortured in body and mind, he felt the approach of death; then summoning all his friends around him, he declared his young son Antiochus his successor, appointing his general Philippus governor and regent during his son's minority, and handed over to him the crown, his royal robe, and his signet. Thus died, in agony and wretchedness, Antiochus called, as if in mockery, the Illustrious (164).

When this news reached Syria, the governor Lysias at once proclaimed the young prince Antiochus king under the name of Eupator. Treacherous and perfidious Jews, hoping to ingratiate themselves with the young monarch, went to Antiochia, and slanderously accused Judas of violence and cruelty. It was not difficult to rouse the anger of the king and his counsellors, who were naturally eager to avenge the numerous defeats of the Syrian troops. A war of extirpation was resolved upon. Antiochus gathered an army numbering 100,000 infantry and 20,000 horse, to

which host he added 32 well-trained elephants. They marched out towards Idumea, besieged Beth-zur, but were forced to retreat by a sally of the Jews. Judas Maccabaeus now pitched his camp in Bath-zacharias, where the king determined to attack him with his whole force. Great preparations were made on both sides. The Syrians distributed the elephants among the different divisions of the army, appointing for each elephant 1000 men wearing coats of mail and helmets of brass, and 500 of the best horsemen; and the animals themselves bore strong wooden towers enclosing skilful archers. "Now when the sun shone upon the shields of gold and brass, the mountains glistened and shone like lamps of fire." But Judas, intrepid as ever, did not hesitate to attack even so formidable an army. At his first assault, 600 men of the Syrian troops were slain. His brother Eleazar, ready to sacrifice his life for the welfare of his people, thinking that he saw the king conspicuous upon one of the elephants, dashed forward among the troops, dealing his fatal blows right and left, and forced a passage through the hostile ranks; then creeping under what he imagined to be the king's elephant, he pierced it through: the animal fell, and crushed him to death by its weight. Yet Judas thought it prudent to retreat before the immense superiority of the enemy. Antiochus advanced to Beth-zur, which town was compelled to surrender from want of corn — for it happened to be a Sabbath-year — and was forthwith garrisoned by Syrian troops. Then Antiochus besieged Jerusalem, hurling upon the walls stones and fire brands. The Jews resisted long with wonderful bravery; yet their defeat was inevitable; for they also suffered from famine on account of the Sabbath-year, which had caused their fields to remain uncultivated. But about this time the king's general Lysias heard that Philippus had returned from Persia, and had taken possession of Antiochia, with a view

of seizing the government. Lysias, therefore, prevailed upon Antiochus to conclude peace with the Jews, in order to secure his own capital. The peace was accepted, and the Jews were promised the full enjoyment of their political and religious rights. But when the king entered into the citadel of Zion, and saw its strength, he treacherously commanded the walls to be pulled down and the fortifications to be dismantled. Then he went with his army to Antiochia, which he found in possession of Philip, but which, after a short siege, he succeeded in wresting from him. — Not long afterwards (160) there appeared a new claimant to the throne of the Seleucidae. Demetrius (I), the son of Seleucus Philopator and brother of Antiochus Epiphanes, escaped from Rome whither he had been sent as a hostage, landed on the Syrian coast, and proclaimed himself king of the land. He was received by the people with enthusiasm, marched at once upon Antiochia, where he seized and killed the young king his nephew, and his general Lysias. This event was welcome to those wicked Jews who bore unwillingly the strict and severe rule of the Maccabees. Among them was a perfidious priest, Alcimus, who aspired to the High-priesthood. He went with many others to Demetrius, poured the vilest calumnies into his credulous ears, and incited him to a war of conquest against Judea. Demetrius, appointing Alcimus High-priest, sent out with him Bacchides, one of his generals, to subdue the southern provinces of Palestine. When they arrived before Jerusalem, the Jews sent messengers to Alcimus, of whom, as High-priest, they expected no evil. Alcimus made deceitful promises, but suddenly ordered sixty of the delegates to be massacred. The Jews gave vent to their grief and indignation in bitter laments. Bacchides now retreated from Jerusalem, and pitched his camp in Bezeth, where he seized

many Jews, and cast them into pits. Then he committed the country to the care of Alcimus, leaving him a sufficient army for defence, and returned to Antiochia. The base Alcimus and his followers now raged fiercely against the opponents of the Syrian rule; and Jerusalem especially, where all disaffected spirits assembled, became the scene of fearful bloodshed. But Judas Maccabaeus, filled with wrath against the impious traitors, traversed the country with his faithful band, expelling everywhere the evil-disposed, and restoring the old order of things. His name and power were dreaded, and no one dared to oppose him. Alcimus, defeated on all points, deemed it prudent to leave Judea; he went to king Demetrius at Antiochia, and accused the Jews of perfidy and every crime. Demetrius, thus appealed to, at once dispatched Nicanor, one of his celebrated generals, who bore a deadly hatred to the Jews, and bade him carry on a war of destruction against them. Nicanor came to Jerusalem with a great force, and cunningly allured Judas and his brothers to his camp; but they fortunately became aware that their assassination was planned, and they succeeded in effecting their escape. Both armies met not much later in battle at Caphar Salama near Jerusalem, and once again the arms of Judas were triumphant. Five thousand Syrians were slain, and Nicanor retreated into the city of Zion. He penetrated into the Temple, and, mocking and insulting the priests, he swore in fierce wrath that he would burn the Temple, unless Judas were delivered into his hands. Cries of anguish and lamentation filled the town. But soon afterwards Nicanor encamped at Beth-horon. Judas collected and re-inforced his army, which amounted to 3,000 men; a great battle was fought on the 13th day of Adar; the Syrians were completely discomfited; they fled and were pursued till Gazera; and Nicanor himself was among the slain. All

escape was shut off by the men of Judah who rushed forth from their towns, and joined in the pursuit of the enemy. Immense spoil was taken. Nicanor's head and proud right hand were cut off and fixed over the gates of Jerusalem. Joy and gladness now reigned throughout Judea; and it was ordained that the anniversary of this great victory — the 13th of Adar — should in all future times be celebrated. It was kept under the name of "the Feast of Nicanor" for many centuries; but it was later abandoned because the "Fast of Esther" falls on the same day.

Judas felt that it would be impossible to maintain the safety of his people without powerful allies; and having heard of the valour of the Romans, of their widely spread power, their invincible arms, and wise statesmanship, he determined to place his own little commonwealth under the protection of their mighty name. He had heard that they were implacable enemies, but sure and steadfast friends; that they were able and willing to help their allies against formidable foes; and his sympathies were especially roused when he learnt that "none of them bore a crown or was clothed in purple, to be exalted above his fellow-citizens."

He therefore sent two trustworthy men, Eupolemus and Jason, the son of Eleazar, to Rome, to offer a treaty of friendship, and to solicit assistance against the Syrians whenever it should be required. The Roman senate accepted the proposal, and the treaty was concluded and ratified in due form (161). As an earnest of their good faith, the Romans wrote without loss of time to Demetrius in these terms: "Wherefore hast thou made the yoke heavy upon our friends and confederates the Jews? If, therefore, they complain any more against thee, we will do them justice, and fight with them by sea and by land."

But Demetrius would not leave the death of his general Nicanor unavenged. Before the treaty with Rome

could have been proclaimed, he sent Bacchides and Alcimus again into Judea at the head of a large host. They first marched into Galilee, laid siege to Masaloth near Arbela, and slew many Hebrews. Then they passed southward, and, in the month of Nisan in the year 161, they appeared before Jerusalem. But they soon removed from here, and pitched their tents at Berea with 20,000 foot soldiers and 2,000 horsemen; while Judas encamped at Eleasa with 3,000 chosen men. When they saw the immense superiority of the enemy, many of them fled in fear, and 800 men only remained faithful to Judas. But even with this little band he was determined to fight the unequal battle, and he said, "Let us arise and go up against our enemies; perhaps we may be able to withstand them." His captains, believing resistance utterly fruitless, dissuaded him with fervor, and replied, "We shall never be able; let us now rather save our lives, and later we will return with our brethren and fight against them; for we are but few." Then Judas addressed his men thus: "God forbid that I should do this thing to flee away from them: if our time be come, let us die manfully for our brethren, and leave behind no stain upon our honour!" The battle commenced almost immediately, and it was fought with desperate obstinacy on both sides. Judas, rushing onward with his old lion-hearted courage, obtained the mastery over the right wing of the enemy, and pursued them to mount Azotus; but then the left wing fiercely followed Judas and closed round him and his men; a fearful struggle ensued; many were killed on either side — and among the slain was the great Judas himself.

When their leader had fallen, the small remnant of his followers fled in despair. His brothers Jonathan and Simon took him from the battle field, and buried him in the sepulchre of his fathers in Modin. All Israel be-

wailed him for many days, and a song of lamentation was recited, of which this was the burden: "How is the valiant man fallen that delivered Israel!" Indeed it was not easy to condense in an elegy all the wonderful exploits of the noble hero; and his historian, feeling this difficulty, takes leave of him with these words: "And as for the other things concerning Judas and his wars, and the brave acts which he did, and his greatness, they are not written, for they were very many."

165. JONATHAN (161—143).

[1 Macc. IX. 23—XIII. 30.]

Bacchides, after his victory, showed no spirit of moderation. He searched out the adherents of Judas, insulted and persecuted them, and put many to death. "So was there a great affliction in Israel, the like whereof was not since the time that a prophet was not seen among them." But the race of the Asmoneans was not extinct. The spirit of Judas lived in his brothers, and the Jews appointed Jonathan as his successor in the leadership. Bacchides, indignant and alarmed at the election of another chief from the same hated family, determined to kill him. With this object in view he crossed the Jordan, where Jonathan had encamped near the well of Asphar. Not long before, his brother John had been assailed and slain in the southern desert by the children of Jambri, and to avenge his death, Jonathan lay in wait for a great marriage procession of the Jambrites, when he killed many men and women, and then returned to Asphar. Here Bacchides resolved to attack the Jews on a Sabbath-day; but Jonathan, too wise to imperil his army by a narrow adherence to the letter of the Law, at once prepared for defence, and said to his men: "Now let us go up and fight

for our lives, since it does not stand with us as in time past. For, behold, the battle is before us and behind us, and the water of Jordan on this side and that side, the marsh likewise, nor is there a place for us to turn aside." In the battle that ensued, Jonathan put Bacchides to flight, and killed a thousand of the enemy; and then he courageously swam with his men over the Jordan, whither the Syrians did not dare to follow him. But Demetrius now strongly garrisoned the principal towns of Judah, as Jericho, Emmaus, and Beth-horon, Bethel, Timnah, Beth-zur, and Gazara; he took the most eminent men as hostages, and kept them prisoners in the citadel of Jerusalem. The infamous High-priest Alcimus, emboldened by the example of his Syrian protector, commanded the wall of the inner Court of the Temple to be pulled down; but the work of destruction had scarcely commenced when Alcimus was suddenly smitten with palsy, and he died soon afterwards in great torture (160). Bacchides now returned to Syria, and Judea enjoyed peace for two years. But there were traitors who felt uneasy under Jonathan's watchful supervision, and who went to Demetrius, urging him to send again an army into Judea. Bacchides came with a great host, and insidiously attempted to assassinate Jonathan and Simon. But his designs failed, and the brothers retreated with their followers to Beth-basi in the desert, and fortified the place. Bacchides approached to attack the stronghold, whilst Jonathan made successful raids into the neighbouring territories. Simon defending Beth-basi with the utmost vigour, made bold sallies upon the army of Bacchides, and burnt his materials of war. The Syrian general, sorely pressed, now vented his rage against those who had called him into the land, killed many of them, and prepared for departure. But Jonathan, in order to save the prisoners, offered him peace, which was accepted. Bacchides

delivered up the prisoners, returned to Syria, and never appeared again in Judea. Jonathan who was greatly honoured for his devotion to his country and for his valour, judged the people, and regulated the internal affairs of the land.

But the kingdom of Syria itself was torn by the strife of factions. In the year 153, Alexander Bala, a son of Antiochus Epiphanes, laid claim to the throne, and his pretensions were favoured by the Romans. His uncle Demetrius, actively preparing against the dangerous revolt, sent messengers to Jonathan, reminded him of their treaty of peace, and demanded that the Jewish hostages who were kept prisoners on Mount Zion, should be delivered up to him. But Jonathan, remembering the faithlessness and cruelty of Demetrius, restored the hostages to their parents and relations, fortified many cities, and expelled the heathens from the old strongholds, except from Beth-zur, where a large number of Syrians resisted with success. The pretender Alexander, hearing with admiration of the exploits of Jonathan, was anxious to secure such an ally, and sent him friendly greetings and overtures of peace, declared him High-priest, and presented him, in token of his respect, with a magnificent purple robe and a golden crown. Jonathan accepted the proposal, and on the Feast of Tabernacles appeared for the first time in his splendid pontifical vestments. Demetrius, alarmed by this alliance, and desirous to outbid his rival, sent again messengers to Jonathan, and, in order to tempt the Jews, made them the most alluring promises, offered them public grants for the service of the Temple, and immunity from all tribute, taxes, and tithes. But the Jews felt that these fair words were not to be relied upon; they declined to listen to Demetrius, and remained faithful to Alexander. Both Syrian kings now prepared for battle, in which Demetrius,

though fighting bravely, was utterly routed and himself slain. Alexander was then firmly established on the throne of Syria, and in order to strengthen his position, he married Cleopatra, the daughter of the Egyptian king Ptolemy Physcon (151), and solemnised the wedding at Ptolemais with the greatest splendour. Jonathan arrived with rich presents at Ptolemais to offer his good wishes. He was treated by Alexander with distinction, and thus obtained a signal triumph over those treacherous Jews who had tried by calumny to rouse the new king's anger against him.

But Syria was not long allowed to enjoy undisturbed tranquillity. A few years later (148), Demetrius, the son of the slain monarch of the same name, tried to regain the crown of his father. When he had arrived from Crete and landed in Syria, Alexander proceeded in haste and alarm to Antiochia. Demetrius appointed Apollonius his general, who, collecting a large force, especially of horsemen, insolently gave Jonathan the choice between war and unconditional submission, and without delay encamped before Jamnia. Jonathan, provoked by this audacity, marched with 10,000 chosen men to Joppa, which was garrisoned by the troops of Apollonius, besieged the town, and took it. Apollonius, desirous to fight in a plain, where his well-trained cavalry would be available, proceeded to Ashdod, whither he was followed by Jonathan. He had concealed in ambush 1,000 horsemen, who incessantly shot their arrows upon Jonathan's men; but these sustained the attack bravely, till Simon and his troops came to the rescue, and then they put the enemy to flight, many of whom sought refuge in the temple of Dagon in Ashdod. Jonathan pursued them, burnt the temple, and killed 8,000 Syrians. The town of Ashdod also and other neighbouring cities were destroyed by fire. The inhabitants of Ashkelon surrendered of

their own accord. Jonathan now returned to Jerusalem laden with rich spoil. King Alexander, in a transport of joy and gratitude, overwhelmed Jonathan with marks of honour and respect, sent him splendid garments, and a gold buckle, such as was only worn by blood relations of the king, and gave him the town Ekron with its surrounding lands as his hereditary property. Soon afterwards, Ptolemy Physcon, basely conspiring against his son-in-law, marched out to conquer Syria. The towns of Palestine allowed him free passage by command of his unsuspecting son-in-law, who was just then absent, trying to enforce his authority in Cilicia. He visited the site of the burnt temple of Dagon in Ashdod; but he reservedly withheld all unfavourable remarks against the Jews. In Joppa he received the friendly greetings of Jonathan, and dismissed him with expressions of goodwill; but then, in the absence of Alexander, he easily conquered all the towns on the coast up to Seleucia. He sent messengers to Demetrius requesting his alliance, and offering him in marriage his daughter Cleopatra, whom he had taken by force from the royal palace. When Demetrius assented, Ptolemy declared open war against his son-in-law. He entered the capital Antiochia, and placed upon his head the two crowns of Egypt and of Syria. Alexander, informed of these events, returned hastily and engaged in battle with Ptolemy. He was defeated, and escaped into Arabia, where he was killed by the chief Zabdiel, who sent his head to the usurper. But Ptolemy died a few days after the battle, and now the young Demetrius was proclaimed king of Syria (146).

In the mean time Jonathan, profiting by the confusion in Syria, had besieged the citadel of Zion with great vigour, and had every hope of gaining this most important stronghold. But some of those traitors, who were never wanting in Judea to damage the national cause, informed

Demetrius of the impending danger, and accused Jonathan of arbitrary rule. The king, therefore, ordered the Jewish leader to desist from the siege, and to come without delay to Ptolemais for an interview. Jonathan, while giving directions for the active continuance of the siege, went to Ptolemais with rich presents of silver and gold and raiments. By prudence and discretion he succeeded in gaining the king's entire confidence and favour; he was confirmed in the High-priesthood and in all his other honours, and treated with the utmost regard. Thus encouraged, he requested Demetrius to release Judea and Samaria from the obligation of the tribute, in return for which he promised 300 talents. Demetrius granted the request, and ratified the privileges by a decree, which he sent to the governor Lasthenes, to be made known by public proclamation.

Demetrius deemed it proper to dismiss all native soldiers, and to retain only the foreign hirelings. This step caused the greatest discontent among the Syrians. Alexander Bala had left a son Antiochus, who was educated under the care of the Arabian Imalkua. Tryphon, an old friend of Alexander, hoping to turn the murmurs of the Syrian army to the advantage of his son, requested Imalkua to entrust him with the young Antiochus, as he desired to declare him king. The public indignation against Demetrius had now reached a most dangerous pitch, and when Jonathan sent messengers to him with the request to withdraw the Syrian troops from the citadel of Zion, Demetrius promised this and many other advantages, on condition that Jonathan would send troops to Antiochia to afford him personal protection. The High-priest at once dispatched 3,000 Jewish soldiers to the Syrian capital. Here, at the instigation of Tryphon, a furious revolt had broken out. The Jews fought with marvellous courage against the rebels, of whom they killed an enormous number — it is stated

100,000 — and regardless of their own peril, they saved the life of Demetrius. They were sent back to Jerusalem highly honoured and laden with costly spoil. But when Demetrius saw himself again safely established on the throne, he refused to keep the promises he had given to Jonathan, he even assumed a position of hostility, and bitterly oppressed him.

Unsupported by the Jews, Demetrius could not maintain his position long. Tryphon returned with the prince Antiochus, boldly raised the standard of revolt, and by the aid of the dismissed Syrian soldiers, he defeated Demetrius, compelled him to flee, and took possession of Antiochia (138). The young king Antiochus VI solicited the friendship of Jonathan, confirmed him in the High-priesthood and in all his other rights, presented him with purple robes and precious ornaments, gave him permission to drink out of golden vessels, and appointed his brother Simon governor over the whole coast-land from Tyre down to the river of Egypt. Jonathan, re-inforced by Syrian soldiers who followed his standard in large numbers, traversed the whole land from Ashkelon to Damascus. He was everywhere received with enthusiasm; a few towns only, such as Gaza, opposed him, but were forced into subjection. Simon in the mean time besieged and took Beth-zur, which he garrisoned with Jewish troops; but the generals of Demetrius encamped at Kadesh in Galilee with a large host, intending to cut off the return of Jonathan. The latter, on his way home, passed the sea of Gennezareth, and thence marched into the plain of Asor. Here his enemies laid an ambush for him; the Jewish soldiers, perceiving the danger, fled in alarm; a few captains only remained. With these Jonathan bravely attacked the Syrians, and put them to flight. Now the scattered troops returned to their leader, 3,000 of the enemy were killed, and Jonathan re-entered Jerusalem in safety.

He then sent messengers to Rome and Sparta to renew the old treaties which had been concluded by Judas and the High-priest Onias.

However, the expelled Demetrius did not give up the hope of recovering the throne of Syria. His generals called together a large army; but Jonathan, justly foreseeing danger to himself, advanced rapidly to Hamath to meet them. When they saw him well armed and prepared for battle, they secretly retreated over the river Eleutheris, so that Jonathan could not pursue them; but he attacked and defeated the Arab tribe of the Zabadeans who had harassed him, and marched to Damascus. Meanwhile Simon had not been inactive. He carried on a successful war in Philistia, especially in Ashkelon, and took Joppa which was on the point of joining Demetrius. Jonathan now returned to Jerusalem, fortified the town with new walls, and strengthened the old ones; while Simon built Adida in the plain, and made it a strong fortress.

But the Syrian general Tryphon, ambitious and unscrupulous, was scheming to overthrow the young Antiochus, whom he had helped to place on the throne, and to seize the crown for himself. He knew well that Jonathan was too honourable a man and too faithful an ally to aid him in his treacherous projects, and he was, therefore, anxious to remove him. He invited him to come to Beth-shan where he had prepared everything for his assassination. But Jonathan's suspicions were roused, and he advanced with 40,000 men. Yet Tryphon, deceiving him by hypocritical protestations of friendship, induced him to send his army away, and to keep only 3,000 men, of whom he was to leave 2,000 in Galilee; with the remaining 1,000 men he was to accompany Tryphon to Ptolemais, which was to be delivered up into his hands. When Jonathan had entered Ptolemais, the gates of the town were at once closed; he was taken prisoner and

his thousand men were slain. Then Tryphon sent without delay a large host of foot- and horsemen to Galilee to destroy the bulk of Jonathan's army. But the Jewish soldiers boldly opposed the Syrians who, seeing no hope of success, desisted from their attack. The Hebrew troops then returned unmolested to Jerusalem, which rang with mournful wailings at the capture of their beloved leader Jonathan. The Jews were justly alarmed, because the surrounding nations prepared for war, saying, "They have no captain, nor have they any help; now, therefore, let us make war upon them, and take away their memorial from among them." Tryphon himself gathered a large army, ready to march upon Jerusalem.

166. SIMON (143—136).

[1 Macc. XIII. 30—XVI. 17.]

But the noble qualities of Judas and Jonathan survived in their younger brother Simon, a man equally remarkable for wisdom and valour. He encouraged the people and allayed their fears, saying: "You yourselves know what great things I and my brothers and my father's house have done for the laws and the Sanctuary, the battles also and troubles which we have seen." Roused to enthusiasm by Simon's exhortations, all promised to fight boldly for their country, and the walls of Jerusalem were rapidly completed and manned. Tryphon marched out from Ptolemais into Judea, and took with him the captive Jonathan. Sending messengers to Simon, he demanded 100 talents of silver and two of his children as hostages; if these demands were complied with, he promised to restore Jonathan to liberty. Although Simon well knew that the proposal was made deceitfully, he yet sent the money and his children, lest the people should accuse him of having selfishly frustrated his brother's rescue. However,

Tryphon did not give up Jonathan, and at once marched out to reach Jerusalem by a circuitous road; but his advance was stopped by a heavy snow-fall, and he proceeded into Gilead. When he had arrived near the town of Bascama, he basely murdered Jonathan, and then returned to Syria. The body of Jonathan was, however, recovered by Simon, and was amidst deep and bitter lamentations deposited in Modin, the city of his fathers. Simon then built a splendid mausoleum over the sepulchre of his father and mother, and of his four brothers. Seven pillars of hewn stone — one of them intended for his own memorial — covered with skilful designs, and surrounded by columns adorned with the representations of armour, weapons, and ships, rose so high that they could be seen by the mariners sailing in the Mediterranean sea; and this monument was long preserved with grateful care.

The faithless Tryphon soon afterwards killed Antiochus, and mercilessly massacring all the adherents of the latter, he proclaimed himself king of Syria. In this critical state of affairs, when the pretensions of two rival kings — Demetrius and Tryphon — were to be decided upon, Simon gave signal proofs of wisdom and prudence. He strengthened all the fortresses of Judah, and supplied them with ample provisions. Then he sent messengers to Demetrius with suitable presents, requesting a remission of taxes, since Tryphon had seriously weakened and recklessly pillaged the country. Demetrius, to secure so powerful an ally, readily granted all that Simon demanded, confirmed him in the possession of the fortresses he had built, and declared himself ready to receive Jews as officers at his court and in his army.

Thus then, in the year 143, the Jews became independent, and Simon was a sovereign prince, so that from that year the public documents and private contracts, and the inscriptions on coins, were dated in this manner: "In the

year of Simon the High-priest, the governor and leader of the Jews."

Simon was alike worthy of and well fitted for the high offices and dignities which he enjoyed. To complete the subjection of Judea, he first besieged and assailed Gaza, which he took after a desperate struggle; he then expelled from the citadel of Jerusalem the apostate and rebellious Jews who from that stronghold had long kept their countrymen in terror; he celebrated this important event, which took place on the 21st of Jar in the year 142, with "thanksgiving, and branches of palm trees, and with viols, and hymns, and songs, because there was destroyed a great enemy out of Israel;" and he ordained that the same day should annually be kept as a festival of joy. He increased the defences of Jerusalem, and made it the principal fortress in the land. Anxious to devote himself entirely to his important spiritual and civil functions, he appointed his valiant son John to be general over all the army, and sent him to Gazara.

The rule of Simon was in every way beneficent and honourable for the Jews. By his wisdom and justice the contending factions were reconciled, and all alike acknowledged his authority. He constructed an excellent harbour at Joppa, enlarged the boundaries of the land, expelled idolators, adorned and enriched the Temple in Jerusalem, and encouraged the cultivation of the soil which yielded produce in unprecedented abundance. The men of maturer years assembled to deliberate on the public weal, while the young men vied with each other in all bodily and warlike exercises. And "Simon made peace in the land, and Israel rejoiced with great joy; for every man sat under his fig tree, and there was none to terrify him; nor was there any left in the land to fight against them; for the kings themselves were overthrown in those days .... He searched out the Law, and every despiser of the Law and

wicked person he punished." The Romans and Spartans, informed of the death of Jonathan, sent messengers to Simon to condole with him, and to renew their former treaties and leagues of friendship. The people, highly gratified at these marks of respect and goodwill from such powerful nations, were anxious to manifest their gratitude to and admiration for Simon, to whom, in a great measure, they owed their proud position. A brazen tablet, on which all his noble deeds and those of his great brothers were engraved, was erected by them and conspicuously placed upon pillars on Mount Zion; whilst copies of it were deposited in the treasury of the Temple.

Demetrius, seeing that unaided he was powerless to resist his rival Tryphon, went with all his forces to Media, in the hope of strengthening himself by conquests (141); but he was taken by the Median king Arsaces and imprisoned. When his son Antiochus learnt his fate, and saw that there was no hope of his return, he sent letters to many nations on the Mediterranean, requesting their support. Among them he appealed to Simon, to whom he promised the undisturbed enjoyment of all his former rights and advantages, and granted the privilege of coining money in his own name. So many followed the standards of Antiochus, that Tryphon, sorely pressed, was compelled to retreat to the fortress of Dora, near Carmel, where he was besieged by his opponent with a large army. Simon, to prove his good faith to Antiochus, sent him a re-inforcement of 2,000 men. But Antiochus, capricious and arbitrary, refused their services, sent them back, revoked all the rights he had conceded to Simon, and dispatched his friend Athenobius into Judea, bidding Simon to surrender Joppa, Gazara, and the citadel of Jerusalem, and exacting tribute for all the places which he had taken beyond the boundaries of Judea; if Simon preferred

keeping the three first-named strongholds, he was to pay for them and for the ravages he had caused in the land 1,000 talents of silver. If he refused to comply with these demands, Antiochus threatened to enforce them by violence. When Athenobius had delivered his insolent message, Simon justified his conduct with calmness and dignity; yet he offered 100 talents as compensation for property unavoidably destroyed during the war. The Syrian ambassador saw with astonishment and envy the magnificence and splendour of Simon's court; he felt that the independence of Judea would be a perpetual danger to the Syrian kingdom; and he left Jerusalem in anger. When Antiochus heard the account of Athenobius, he swore he would take his revenge on Simon.

Meanwhile Tryphon, unable to maintain himself any longer in Dora, had escaped to Orthosias on the Phoenician coast; and now Antiochus, relieved from his chief adversary, sent out his general Cendebeus with a considerable host to invade Judea. Cendebeus lost no time in executing his commission; he fortified Kidron in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and from thence made devastating raids into different parts of Judea. When Simon became aware of the impending dangers, he called his two eldest sons Judas and John before him, and said to them: "I, and my brothers, and my father's house, have ever from our youth to this day fought against the enemies of Israel; and things have prospered so well in our hands, that we have delivered Israel oftentimes. But now I am old, and you, by God's mercy, are of a sufficient age: be you instead of me and my brother, and go and fight for our nation, and the help from heaven be with you!" He gave 20,000 men to his sons, and with these they went to meet Cendebeus. Inspired by the bold example of John, his soldiers crossed over the river near Modin, attacked the Syrians, and pursued

them to Ashdod which they destroyed by fire; and having slain 2,000 of the enemy, they returned triumphantly to Jerusalem.

But treachery once more raised its head in the Jewish commonwealth. Ptolemy, the son-in-law of Simon, had been appointed by him governor of the district of Jericho. He aspired to the High-priesthood, and made a plot to assassinate Simon and his sons. When the aged Simon, accompanied by his two sons Mattathias and Judas, on his journey of supervision through the land, passed through Jericho, Ptolemy induced them to come to the little fortress Docus, where he invited them to a sumptuous repast; and when he saw them merry with wine, he gave the signal to armed men hidden in the banqueting hall, for the murder of his father-in-law and of his two sons (in the month of Shevat in the year 136). Then the assassin, without loss of time, dispatched messengers to king Antiochus (VII), asked him for money and troops, and confidently promised to conquer the land for him. He then ordered the principal Jews to submit to his rule, and prepared for the occupation of Jerusalem and Zion. Feeling that John, the eldest son of Simon, was the main obstacle to his success, he was anxious to kill him also. John was then staying in Gazara, where he learnt with grief and consternation the terrible fate that had befallen his father and his brothers.

Here the account of the Books of the Maccabees closes, and the task which we have proposed to ourselves is finished. The later fortunes of the Asmoneans, who soon afterwards ruled under the title of kings, were varied and for the most part sad. Domestic dissensions, personal jealousies, and the intrigues of rival families, called the Romans into the land, who first became the arbiters, and then the masters of the people. The last of the Maccabees

was dethroned and succeeded by the Idumean Herod (40), after whose death Palestine became a dependency of the Roman empire. But not even then were the internal feuds silenced; religious sects and political factions stood arrayed against each other in fierce hostility; violence and treachery were more rife than ever; till at last the arms of the all-conquering Romans made an end of the exhausted Jewish commonwealth; and after a war and siege almost unparalleled for desperate resistance and frightful bloodshed, Titus, the son of the emperor Vespasianus, took Jerusalem and burnt the Temple (70 A. C.). Thus the glory of Judah departed. As the Jews saw the flames rise high above their Sanctuary, consuming all that was dear and sacred to them, they felt that their existence as a nation was destroyed; and soon afterwards they dispersed over the whole earth, to seek a refuge or a new home among every people and in every land.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

OF THE HISTORY OF THE HEBREWS.

B. C.
2200 Abraham.
1930 Joseph in Egypt.
1920 Jacob and his family settled in Egypt.
1570 Moses born.
1490 Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.
1450 Moses died.
1450—1095 Time of Joshua and the Judges.
1100 Samuel.

1095—1055 Saul king.
1055—1015 David.
1015—975 Solomon.
975 Division of the Empire.

KINGS OF JUDAH. (975—588).	KINGS OF EPHRAIM OR ISRAEL. (975—722).
975—958 Rehoboam.	975—954 Jeroboam.
958—955 Abijah.	
955—914 Asa.	
	954—953 Nadab.
	953—930 Baasha.
	930—928 Elah.
	928 Zimri.
	928—918 Omri.
	918—897 Ahab.
	(Elijah.)

KINGS OF JUDAH.	KINGS OF EPHRAIM OR ISRAEL.
914—891 Jehoshaphat.	
	897—895 Ahaziah. (Elisha.)
	895—884 Jehoram.
891—884 Joram.	
884—883 Ahaziah.	884—856 Jehu.
883—877 Interregnum. (Athaliah.)	
877—838 Joash.	
	856—840 Jehoahaz.
	840—825 Joash.
838—811 Amaziah.	
	825—784 Jeroboam II.
811—759 Uzziah or Azariah.	
	784—774 Interregnum.
	774 Zachariah.
	774 Shallum.
	773—763 Menahem.
	763—739 Pekah.
759—743 Jotham.	
743—728 Ahaz. (Isaiah.)	
	739—722 Hoshea. (Shalmaneser.)
728—699 Hezekiah. (Sennacherib.)	
699—644 Manasseh.	
644—642 Amon.	
642—611 Josiah.	
The Book of the Law discovered. (Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk.)	
Battle of Megiddo.	
611. Jehoahaz or Shallum.	
611—599 Joiakim. (Nebuchadnezzar.)	
599 Jehoiachin.	
599—588 Zedekiah.	
588 Destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.	

588—538 The Jews under Babylonian rule.
(Daniel, Ezekiel, the second Isaiah.)
588—560 Gedaliah Chaldean governor of Judah.
560 Gedaliah murdered.
Emigration of the Jews from Palestine into Egypt.
538 Babylon conquered by Cyrus.
538—332 The Jews under Persian rule.
538 Many Jews return to Palestine by permission of Cyrus. Zerubbabel.
536 Building of the second Temple commenced. Samaritans or Cutheans.
(Haggai, Zechariah.)
516 The Temple completed.
478 Esther queen, Mordecai.
458 Ezra the Scribe leads a colony of Jews from Persia to Palestine; strict reforms.
444 Nehemiah sent by king Artaxerxes as governor to Judea. The town and the walls re-built; new organisation. Sanballat.
432 Nehemiah returned to Persia.
(Malachi, the last prophet.)
332—164 The Jews under Macedonian, Egyptian, and Syrian rule.
312 Ptolemy I Lagi, satrap of Egypt, conquers Palestine after the battle of Gaza.
301 Ptolemy gains another victory in the battle of Ipsus.
283 The Greek or Septuagint translation of the Old Testament commenced in Alexandria, under Ptolemy II Philadelphus.
203 Antiochus III the Great, king of Syria, takes Palestine and Phoenicia.
170 Antiochus IV Epiphanes plunders the Temple in Jerusalem and massacres many Jews.
167 A Syrian army under Heliodorus occupies Jerusalem; the Temple desecrated. Revolt under Mattathias.
167—161 Judas Maccabaeus leader of the Jews.
164 Jerusalem re-taken by the Jews; the Temple consecrated (25th of Cislev).
161 Judas killed in battle.
161—143 His brother Jonathan leader.
143 Jonathan made prisoner by Tryphon.
143—136 His brother Simon leader.

143 The Jews are freed from paying tribute to Syria; Simon sovereign prince.
136 Simon murdered by his son-in-law Ptolemy.

136—105 John Hyrcanus prince and High-priest.
105—104 Aristobulus I, king of the Jews.
104—78 Alexander Jannai king.
78—69 Alexandra, his wife, queen; her son Hyrcanus High-priest.
69—63 Aristobulus, her second son, king; disputes and war with Hyrcanus; Pompey the Great decided for the latter.
63—40 Hyrcanus II ethnarch of Judea.
37—3 A. C. Herod the Great, the Idumean.
70 A. C. Jerusalem taken and the Temple burnt by Titus.

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END OF VOLUME I.

ERRATA.

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—	13	„	20	„ engulfed	„	„ engulphed.
—	30	„	22	„ north	„	„ west.
—	32	„	22	„ relapsed	„	„ relasped.
—	51	„	last but four	„ borne	„	„ born.
—	53	„	17	„ for	„	„ or.
—	83	„	19	„ hereafter	„	„ once.
—	103	„	21	„ undisturbed	„	„ indisturbed.
—	123	„	17	„ Lord	„	„ lord.
—	140	„	17	„ thence	„	„ from here.
—	159	„	2	„ allow	„	„ allowed.
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—	212	„	25	insert th e after o f.		
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—	305	„	10	„ south	„	„ north.
—	376	„	1	add 1055—1049.		
—	381	„	7	„ 1049—1015.		
—	382	„	19	read westward	„	„ northward.
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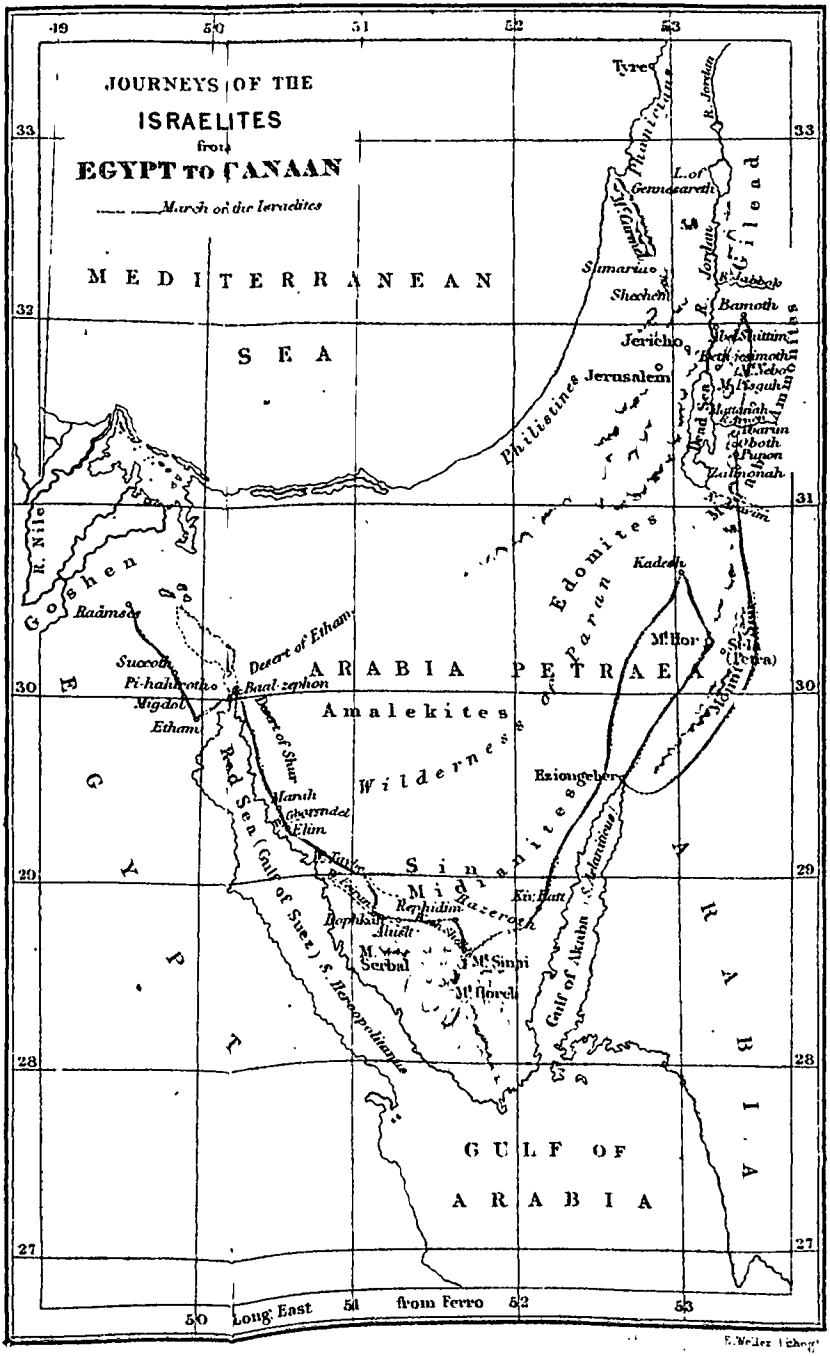
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Marah
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